

SERMONS

ON

Several Occasions.

By JOHN WESLEY, M. A.

Late Fellow of *Lincoln-College*, OXFORD.

V O L. VIII.

L O N D O N:

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in Town and Country. 1788.

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BY JOHN WESTLEY, M.A.

Law Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford.

VOL. VII

LONDON

Printed and sold by the New Chapter, Oxford, and
at the Rev. Mr. Westley's House in London.
in Strand Court, 1782.



On the Education of
Children.

A

S E R M O N

On PROVERBS xxii. 6.



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On the Education of
Children.



S. E. N. O. N.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA





PROVERBS xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way wherein he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

1. **WE** must not imagine, that these words are to be understood in an absolute sense, as if no child that had been trained up in the way wherein he should go, had ever departed from it. Matter of fact will by no means agree with this. So far from it, that it has been a common observation, Some of the best parents have the worst children. It is true, this might sometimes be the case, because good men have not always a good understanding. And without this it is hardly to be expected, that they will know how to train up their children. Besides, those who are in other respects good men, have often too much easiness of temper: so that they go no farther in restraining their children from evil, than old *Eli* did, when he said gently, *Nay, my sons, the report I hear of you is not good.*

This then is no contradiction to the assertion; for their children are not *trained up in the way wherein they should go*. But it must be acknowledged, some have been trained therein with all possible care and diligence: and yet before they were old, yea, in the strength of their years, they did utterly depart from it.

2. The words then must be understood with some limitation, and then they contain an unquestionable truth. It is a general, though not an universal promise, and many have found the happy accomplishment of it. As this is the most probable method for making their children pious, which any parents can take, so it generally, although not always, meets with the desired success. The God of their fathers is with their children: he blesses their endeavours: and they have the satisfaction of leaving their religion, as well as their worldly substance, to those that descend from them.

3. But what is *the way wherein* a child *should go*? And how shall we *train him up* therein? The ground of this is admirably well laid down by Mr. Law, in his "Serious Call to a devout life." Part of his words are,

"Had we continued perfect, as God created the first man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a sufficient self-instructor for every one. But as sickness and diseases have created

created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the disorders of our rational nature have introduced the necessity of education and tutors.

“And as the only end of a physician is, to restore nature to its own state, so the only end of education is, to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education therefore is to be considered, as reason borrowed at second hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection. And as physic may justly be called the art of restoring health, so education should be considered in no other light, than as the art of recovering to man his rational perfection.

“This was the end pursued by the youths that attended upon *Pythagoras*, *Socrates* and *Plato*. Their every day lessons and instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end, and the right use of his faculties: upon the immortality of the soul, its relation to God; the agreeableness of virtue to the divine nature; upon the necessity of temperance, justice, mercy, and truth, and the folly of indulging our passions.

“Now as Christianity has, as it were, new created the moral and religious world, and set every thing that is reasonable, wise, holy and desirable, in its true point of light: so one would expect the education of children should be as much

much mended by Christianity, as the doctrines of religion are.

"As it has introduced a new state of things, and so fully informed us of the nature of man and the end of his creation : as it has fixt all our goods and evils, taught us the means of purifying our souls, of pleasing God and being happy eternally : one might naturally suppose that every Christian country abounded with schools, not only for teaching a few questions and answers of a catechism, but for the forming, training and practising children in such a course of life, as the sublimest doctrines of Christianity require.

"An education under *Pythagoras* or *Socrates* had no other end but to teach children, to think, and act as *Pythagoras* and *Socrates* did.

"And is it not reasonable to suppose that a Christian Education should have no other end but to teach them how to think and judge and act according to the strictest rules of Christianity?

"At least one would suppose, that in all Christian schools, the teaching them to begin their lives in the spirit of Christianity, in such abstinence, humility, sobriety and devotion as Christianity requires, should not only be more, but a hundred times more regarded than any or all things else.

"For those that educate us should imitate our guardian angels, suggest nothing to our minds,
but

but what is wise and holy ; help us to discover every false judgment of our minds, and to subdue every wrong passion of our hearts.

“ And it is as reasonable to expect and require all this benefit from a christian education, as to require that physic should strengthen all that is right in our nature, and remove all our diseases.”

4. Let it be carefully remembered all this time, That God, not man, is the Physician of Souls : that it is he and none else, who *giveth medicine to heal our natural sickness* : that *all the help which is done upon earth, he doth it himself* : that none of all the children of men is able to *bring a clean thing out of an unclean* : and in a word, that it is *God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. But it is generally his pleasure to work by his creatures : to help man by man. He honours men, to be in this sense, *workers together with him*. By this means the reward is ours, while the glory redounds to him.

5. This being premised, in order to see distinctly, What is the way wherein we should train up a child, let us consider, What are the diseases of his nature ? What are those spiritual diseases, which every one that is born of a woman, brings with him into the world ?

Is not the first of these *Atheism*? After all that has been so plausibly written concerning "the innate idea of God;" after all that has been said, of its being common to all men, in all ages and nations: it does not appear, that man has naturally any more idea of God, than any of the beasts of the field: he has no knowledge of God at all; no fear of God at all: neither is God in all his thoughts. Whatever change may afterwards be wrought, (whether by the grace of God, or by his own reflection, or by education) he is by nature a mere Atheist.

6. Indeed it may be said, that every man is by nature, as it were, his own god. He worships himself. He is, in his own conception, absolute Lord of himself. *Dryden's* Hero speaks only according to nature, when he says, "Myself am King of me." He seeks himself in all things. He pleases himself. And why not? Who is Lord over him? *His own will* is his only law: he does this or that, because it is his good pleasure. In the same spirit as the son of the morning said in old time,—*I will sit upon the sides of the North*, he says "*I will do thus or thus.*" And do we not find sensible men on every side, who are of the self-same spirit? who, if asked, "Why did you do this?" will readily answer, "Because I had a mind to it."

7. Another

7. Another evil disease which every human soul brings into the world with him, is *pride*; a continual profaneness to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Every man can discern more or less of this disease, in every one,—but himself. And indeed, if he could discern it in himself, it would subsist no longer: for he would then in consequence think of himself, just as he ought to think.

8. The next disease, natural to every human soul, born with every man, is *love of the world*. Every man is by nature a lover of the creature, instead of the Creator: a *lover of pleasure*, in every kind, *more than a lover of God*. He is a slave to foolish and hurtful desires, in one kind or another; either to the *desire of the flesh*, the *desire of the eyes*, or the *pride of life*. The *desire of the flesh* is, a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies one or more of the outward senses. The *desire of the eyes* is a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the internal sense, the imagination, either by things grand, or new, or beautiful. The *pride of life* seems to mean a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the sense of honour. To this head is usually referred, the *love of money*, one of the basest passions that can have place in the human heart. But it may be doubted, whether this be not an acquired, rather than a natural distemper.

9. Whether

9. Whether this be a natural disease or not; it is certain, *anger* is. The ancient Philosopher defines it, "A sense of injury received, with a desire of revenge." Now, was there ever any one born of a woman, who did not labour under this? Indeed, like other diseases of the mind, it is far more violent in some than in others. But it is *furor brevis*, as the poet speaks: it is a real, though short madness wherever it is.

10. A deviation from *truth* is equally natural to all the children of men. One said in his haste, *All men are liars*: but we may say, upon cool reflection, All natural men will, upon a close temptation, vary from or disguise the truth. If they do not offend against *veracity*, if they do not say what is false, yet they frequently offend against *simplicity*. They use art: they hang out false colours: they practise either simulation or dissimulation. So that you cannot say truly of any person living, till grace has altered nature, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*

11. Every one is likewise prone by nature, to speak or act contrary to *justice*. This is another of the diseases which we bring with us into the world. All human creatures are naturally partial to themselves, and when opportunity offers, have more regard to their own interest or pleasure, than strict justice allows. Neither is any man by nature *merciful*, as our heavenly Father is merciful:
but

but all more or less transgress that glorious rule of mercy as well as justice, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, the same do unto them.*

12. Now if these are the general diseases of human nature, is it not the grand end of education to cure them? And is it not the part of all those to whom God has entrusted the education of children, to take all possible care, first, not to increase, not to feed any of these diseases, (as the generality of parents constantly do) and next, to use every possible means of healing them?

13. To come to particulars. What can parents do, and mothers more especially, to whose care our children are necessarily committed, in their tender-years, with regard to the *Atheism* that is natural to all the children of men? How is this fed by the generality of parents, even those that love, or at least, fear God while in spending hours, perhaps days with their children, they hardly name the name of God? Mean time, they talk of a thousand other things in the world that is round about them. Will not then the things of the present world, which furround these children on every side, naturally take up their thoughts, and set God at a greater distance from them, (if that be possible) than he was before? Do not parents feed the *Atheism* of their children farther, by ascribing the works of creation to *nature*?

Does not the common way of talking about nature leave God quite out of the question? Do they not feed this disease, whenever they talk in the hearing of their children, of any thing *happening* so or so? Of things coming by *chance*? Of good or ill *fortune*? As also when they ascribe this or that event, to the wisdom or power of men: or indeed to any other second causes, as if these governed the world? Yea, do they not feed it unawares, while they are talking of their own wisdom or goodness, or power to do this or that, without expressly mentioning, that all these are the gift of God? All tends to confirm the Atheism of their children, and to keep God out of their thoughts.

14. But we are by no means clear of their blood, if we only go thus far, if we barely do not feed their disease. What can be done to cure it? From the first dawn of reason continually inculcate, God is in this and every place. God made you, and me, and the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and every thing. And every thing is his: heaven and earth and all that is therein. God orders all things: he makes the sun shine, and the wind blow, and the trees bear fruit. Nothing comes by chance: that is a silly word: there is no such thing as chance. As God made the world, so he governs the world, and every thing that is in it. Not so much as a sparrow falls to
the

the ground, without the will of God. And as he governs all things, so he governs all men, good and bad, little and great. He gives them all the power and wisdom they have. And he overrules all. He gives us all the goodness we have: every good thought, and word, and work are from him. Without him we can neither think any thing right, or do any thing right. Thus it is, we are to inculcate upon them, That God is all in all.

15. Thus may we counteract, and by the grace of God assisting us, gradually cure the natural Atheism of our children. But what can we do to cure their *self-will*? It is equally rooted in their nature, and is indeed the original idolatry, which is not confined to one age or country, but is common to all the nations under heaven. And how few parents are to be found even among Christians, even among them that truly fear God, who are not guilty of this matter? Who do not continually feed and increase this grievous distemper in their children? To let them have their own will, does this most effectually. To let them take their own way, is the sure method of increasing their self-will sevenfold. But who has the resolution to do otherwise? One parent in a hundred? Who can be so singular, so cruel, as not more or less to *humour* her child? "And why should you not? What harm can there be

in this, which every body does?" The harm is, that it strengthens their will more and more, till it will neither bow to God nor man. To humour children is, as far as in us lies, to make their disease incurable. A wise parent, on the other hand, should begin to break their will, the first moment it appears. In the whole art of Christian education there is nothing more important than this. The will of a parent is to a little child in the place of the will of God. Therefore studiously teach them to submit to this while they are children, that they may be ready to submit to his will, when they are men. But in order to carry this point, you will need incredible firmness and resolution. For after you have once begun, you must never more give way. You must hold on still in an even course; you must never intermit your attention for one hour; otherwise you will lose your labour.

16. If you are not willing to lose all the labour you have been at, to break the will of your child, to bring his will into subjection to yours, that it may be afterward subject to the will of God, there is one advice, which though little known, should be particularly attended to. It may seem a small circumstance: but it is of more consequence than one can easily imagine. It is this; never, on any account give a child any thing

thing that it cries for. For it is a true observation, (and you may make the experiment as often as you please) If you give a child what he cries for, you *pay him for crying*: and then he will certainly cry again. "But if I do not give it him when he cries, he will scream all day long." If he does, it is your own fault; for it is in your power effectually to prevent it. For no mother need suffer a child to cry aloud after it is a year old. "Why, it is impossible to hinder it." So many suppose; but it is an entire mistake. I am a witness of the direct contrary; and so are many others. My own mother had ten children, each of whom had spirit enough. Yet not one of them was ever heard to cry aloud, after it was a year old. A gentlewoman of *Sheffield*, (several of whose children I suppose are alive still) assured me, she had the same success, with regard to her eight children. When some were objecting to the possibility of this, Mr. *Parson Greenwood*, (well known in the North of *England*,) replied, "This cannot be impossible: I have had the proof of it in my own family. Nay, of more than this. I had six children by my former wife. And she suffered none of them to cry aloud, after they were ten months old. And yet none of their spirits were so broken, as to unfit them for any of the offices of life." This therefore may be done by any woman of sense, who may thereby

save herself abundance of trouble, and prevent that disagreeable noise, the squawling of young children, from being heard under her roof. But I allow, none but a woman of sense will be able to affect this. Yea, and a woman of such patience and resolution, as only the grace of God can give. However, this is doubtless the more excellent way: and she that is able to receive it, let her receive it!

It is hard to say, whether self-will or *pride* be the more fatal distemper. It was chiefly pride that threw down so many of the stars of heaven, and turned angels into devils. But what can parents do, in order to check this until it can be radically cured?

First, beware of adding fuel to the flame, of feeding the disease, which you should cure. Almost all parents are guilty of doing this, by praising their children to their face. If you are sensible of the folly and cruelty of this, see that you sacredly abstain from it. And in spite of either fear or complaisance, go one step farther. Not only do not encourage, but do not suffer others, to do what you dare not do yourself. How few parents are sufficiently aware of this? Or at least sufficiently resolute to practise it? To check every one at the first word, that would praise them before their face. Even those who would not on any account "sit attentive to their

own applause," nevertheless do not scruple to sit attentive to the applause of their children? Yea, and that to their face! O consider! Is not this the spreading a net for their feet? Is it not a grievous incentive to pride, even if they are praised, for what is truly praise-worthy? Is it not doubly hurtful, if they are praised, for things not truly praise-worthy? Things of an indifferent nature, as sense, good breeding, beauty, elegance of apparel! This is liable not only to hurt the heart, but their understanding also. It has a manifest and direct tendency, to infuse pride and folly together: to pervert both their taste and judgment, teaching them to value what is dung and dross in the sight of God.

18. If on the contrary, you desire, without loss of time to strike at the root of their pride, teach your children, as soon as possibly you can, that they are fallen spirits; that they are fallen short of that glorious image of God, wherein they were first created; that they are not now, as they were once, incorruptible pictures of the God of glory; bearing the express likeness of the wise, the good, the holy Father of spirits; but more ignorant, more foolish, and more wicked, than they can possibly conceive. Shew them, that in pride, passion and revenge, they are now like the devil. And that in foolish desires and groveling appetites, they are like the beasts of the field.

Watch

Watch over them diligently in this respect, that whenever occasion offers, you may, "Pride in its earliest motions find," and check the very first appearance of it.

If you ask, "But how shall I encourage them when they do well, if I am never to commend them?" I answer, I did not affirm this: I did not say, "You are *never* to commend them. I know, many writers assert this, and writers of eminent piety. They say, To commend man, is to rob God, and therefore condemn it altogether. But what say the Scriptures? I read there, that our Lord himself frequently commended his own disciples: and the great Apostle scruples not to commend the Corinthians, Philippians, and divers others to whom he writes. We may not therefore condemn this altogether. But I say, use it exceeding sparingly. And when you use it, let it be with the utmost caution, directing them at the same moment, to look upon all they have as the free gift of God, and with the deepest self-abasement to say, *Not unto us! Not unto us! but unto thy name give the praise!*

19. Next to self-will and pride, the most fatal disease with which we are born is, *love of the world*. But how studiously do the generality of parents cherish this in its several branches? They cherish *the desire of the flesh*, that is, the tendency to seek happiness in pleasing the outward senses,
by

by studying to "enlarge the pleasure of tasting in their children to the uttermost: not only giving them before they are weaned other things beside milk, the natural food of children, but giving them both before and after, any sort of meat or drink that they will take. Yea, they entice them long before nature requires it, to take wine or strong drink; and provide them with comfits, gingerbread, raisins and whatever fruit they have a mind to. They feed in them *the desire of the eyes*, the propensity to seek happiness in pleasing the imagination, by giving them pretty play-things, glittering toys, shining buckles or buttons, fine clothes, red shoes, laced hats, needless ornaments, as ribbons, necklaces, ruffles: yea, and by proposing any of these as *rewards* for doing their duty, which is stamping a great value upon them. With equal care and attention they cherish in them the third branch of the love of the world, *the pride of life*, the propensity to seek their happiness in *the honour that cometh of men*. Nor is the love of money forgotten: many an exhortation do they hear, on "securing the main chance;" many a lecture exactly agreeing with that of the old Heathen,

Si possis, recte; si non, quocunque modo rem.

Get

Get money honestly if you can; but if nor;
get money.

And they are carefully taught to look on riches and honour as the reward of all their labours.

20. In direct opposition to all this, a wife and truly kind parent will take the utmost care, not to cherish in her children the desire of the flesh, their natural propensity to seek happiness in gratifying the outward sense. With this view she will suffer them to taste no food but milk till they are weaned: (which a thousand experiments shew is most safely and easily done at the seventh month.) And then accustom them to the most simple food, chiefly of vegetables. She may innure them to taste only one food, beside bread, at dinner, and constantly to breakfast and sup on milk, either cold, or heated; but not boiled. She may use them to sit by her at meals and ask for nothing, but take what is given them. She need never, till they are at least nine or ten years old, let them know the taste of tea, or use any other drink at meals, but water or small beer. And they will never desire to taste either meat or drink between meals, if not accustomed thereto. If fruit, comfits or any thing of the kind be given them, let them not touch it but at meals. And never

never propose any of these as a reward ; but teach them to look higher than this.

But herein a difficulty will arise, which it will need much resolution to conquer. Your servants who will not understand your plan, will be continually giving little things to your children, and thereby undoing all your work. This you must prevent if possible, by warning them when they first come into your house, and repeating the warning from time to time. If they *will* do it notwithstanding, you must turn them away. Better lose a good servant than spoil a good child.

Possibly you may have another difficulty to encounter, and one of a still more trying nature. Your mother, or your husband's mother, may live with you ; and you will do well to shew her all possible respect. But let her on no account have the least share in the management of your children. She would undo all that you had done ; she would give them their own will in all things. She would humour them to the destruction of their souls, if not their bodies too. In fourscore years I have not met with one woman that knew how to manage grand-children. My own mother who governed her children so well, could never govern one grand-child. In every other point obey your mother. Give up your will to hers. But with regard to the management of your children, steadily keep the reins in your own hands.

21. A wise and kind parent will be equally cautious, of feeding *the desire of the eyes* in her children. She will give them no pretty playthings, no glittering toys, shining buckles or buttons, fine or gay clothes: no needless ornaments of any kind; nothing that can attract the eye. Nor will she suffer any other person to give them what she will not give them herself. Any thing of the kind that is offered, may be either civilly refused, or received and laid by. If they are displeased at this, you cannot help it. Complaisance, yea, and temporal interest, must needs be set aside, when the eternal interests of your children are at stake.

Your pains will be well requited, if you can inspire them early, with a contempt of all finery; and on the other hand, with a love and esteem, for neat plainness of dress. Teaching them to associate the ideas of plainness and modesty: and those of a fine and a loose woman. Likewise instil into them as early as possible a fear and contempt of pomp and grandeur, an abhorrence and dread of the love of money, and a deep conviction, that riches cannot give happiness. Wean them therefore from all these false ends: habituate them to make God their end in all things, and innure them in all they do, to aim at knowing, loving and serving God.

22. Again,

22. Again, The generality of parents feed anger in their children, yea, the worst part of it, that is, revenge. The silly mother says, "What hurt my child! Give me a blow for it." What horrid work is this? Will not the old murderer teach them this lesson fast enough? Let the christian parent spare no pains to teach them just the contrary. Remind them of the words of our blessed Lord, *It was said of old, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil. Not by returning evil for evil. Rather than this, if a man take away thy cloak, let him take thy coat also.* Remind him of the words of the great Apostle, *Dearly beloved, Avenge not yourselves. For it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.*

23. The generality of parents feed and increase the natural falsehood of their children. How often may we hear that senseless word? "No, it was not *you*; it was not my child that did it: say, it was the cat." What amazing folly is this? Do you feel no remorse, while you are putting a lie in the mouth of your child, before it can speak plain? And do not you think, it will make a good proficiency, when it comes to years of discretion? Others teach them both dissimulation and lying, by their unreasonable severity: and yet others, by admiring and applauding their ingenious lies and cunning tricks. Let the wise

parent on the contrary, teach them to *put away all lying*, and both in little things and great, in jest or earnest, speak the very truth from their heart. Teach them that the author of all falsehood is the devil, who *is a liar and the father of it*. Teach them to abhor and despise, not only lying, but all equivocating, all cunning and dissimulation. Use every means to give them a love of truth: of veracity, sincerity and simplicity, and of openness both of spirit and behaviour.

24. Most parents increase the natural tendency to *injustice* in their children, by conniving at their wronging each other, if not laughing at, or even applauding their witty contrivances to cheat one another. Beware of every thing of this kind: and from their very infancy, sow the seeds of justice in their hearts; and train them up in the *exactest* practice of it. If possible, teach them the love of justice, and that in the least things as well as the greatest. Impress upon their mind the old proverb, "He that will steal a penny, will steal a pound." Habituate them to render unto all their due, even to the uttermost farthing.

25. Many parents connive likewise at the *ill-nature* of their children, and thereby strengthen it. But truly affectionate parents will not indulge them in any kind or degree of *unmercifulness*. They will not suffer them to vex their brothers or sisters, either by word or deed. They

They will not allow them to hurt or give pain to any thing that has life. They will not permit them to rob birds-nests, much less to kill any thing without necessity: not even snakes, which are as innocent as worms, or toads, which notwithstanding their ugliness, and the ill name they lie under, have been proved over and over, to be as harmless as flies. Let them extend in its measure, the rule of doing as they would be done by, to every animal whatsoever. Ye that are truly kind parents, in the morning, in the evening, and all the day beside, press upon all your children, to *walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us:* to mind that one point, *God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.*



On Obedience to Parents.

A

S E R M O N

On COLOSSIANS iii. 20.





On Obedience to Parents.

SEVEN



ON COLLEGE IN 20.





COLOSSIANS iii. 20.

Children obey your Parents in all Things.

1. **I**T has been a subject of controversy for many years, Whether there are any innate principles in the mind of man? But it is allowed on all hands, if there be any practical principles naturally implanted in the soul, That "we ought to honour our Parents" will claim this character almost before any other. It is enumerated amongst those universal principles by the most ancient Authors, and is undoubtedly found even among most savages, in the most barbarous nations. We may trace it through all the extent of *Europe* and *Asia*, through the wilds of *Afric*, and the forests of *America*. And it is not less, but more observable in the most civilized nations. So it was, first in the Eastern parts of the world, which were for so many ages, the seat of empire, of learning and politeness, as well as of religion. So it was afterwards, in all the Grecian States,

States, and throughout the whole Roman Empire. In this respect it is plain, they that *have not the written law, are a law unto themselves*; shewing the work (the substance) of the law, to be written in their hearts.

2. And wherever God has revealed his will to man, this law has been a part of that Revelation. It has been herein opened afresh, considerably enlarged, and enforced in the strongest manner. In the Jewish Revelation, the notorious breakers thereof were punishable with death. And this was one of the laws which our blessed Lord did not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Accordingly he severely reprov'd the Scribes and Pharisees, for making it void through their traditions: clearly shewing that the obligation thereof extended to all ages. It is the substance of this which St. Paul delivers to the Ephesians (chap. vi. ver. 1.) *Children obey your Parents in the Lord*; and again in those words to the Colossians, *Children, obey your parents in all things*.

3. It is observable, that the Apostle enforces this duty by a three-fold encouragement: First, to the Ephesians he adds, *For this is right*: it is an instance of justice as well as mercy. It is no more than their due: it is what we owe to them, for the very being which we have received from them. Secondly, *This is acceptable to the Lord*; it is peculiarly pleasing to the great Father of men

men and angels, that we should pay honour and obedience to the Fathers of our flesh. Thirdly, It is *the first commandment with promise*; the first to the performance whereof a peculiar promise is annexed, *that it may be well with thee, and that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* This promise has been generally understood, to include health and temporal blessings as well as long life. And we have seen innumerable proofs that it belongs to the Christian as well as the Jewish dispensation: many remarkable instances of its accomplishment occur even at this day.

But what is the meaning of these words, *Children, obey your parents in all things.* I will endeavour by the assistance of God, first to explain, and then to apply them.

I. 1. First, I will endeavour to explain these words; and the rather, because so few people seem to understand them. Look round into the world, not the heathen, but the christian world, nay, the reformed part of it. Look among those that have the scriptures in their own tongue: and who is there that appears even to have heard of this? Here and there a child obeys the parent out of fear, or perhaps out of natural affection. But how many children can you find that obey their fathers and mothers, out of a sense of duty
to

to God? And how many parents can you find, that duly inculcate this duty upon their children? I doubt a vast majority both of parents and children are totally ignorant of the whole affair. For the sake of these, I will make it as plain as I can: but still I am thoroughly sensible, those that are not willing to be convinced, will no more understand what I say, than if I was talking Greek or Hebrew.

2. You will easily observe, that by *parents* the Apostle means both fathers and mothers, as he refers us to the fifth commandment, which names both the one and the other. And however human laws may vary herein, the law of God makes no difference; but lays us under the same obligation of obeying both the one and the other.

3. But before we consider, How we are to obey our parents, it may be enquired, how long we are to obey them? Are children to obey, only till they run alone? Till they go to school? Till they can read and write? Or till they are as tall as their parents? Or, attain to years of discretion? Nay, if they obey only because they fear to be beaten, or because otherwise they cannot procure food and raiment, what avails such obedience? Those only who obey their parents, when they can live without them, and when they

neither hope nor fear any thing from them, shall have praise from God.

4. "But is a man that is at age, or a woman that is married, under any farther obligation to obey their parents?" With regard to marriage, although it is true, that a man is to leave father and mother, and to cleave unto his wife: and by parity of reason, she is to leave father and mother and cleave unto her husband: (in consequence of which there may be some particular cases wherein conjugal duty must take place of filial) yet I cannot learn either from Scripture or reason, that marriage either cancels or lessens the general obligation of filial duty. Much less does it appear, that it is either cancelled or lessened by our having lived one and twenty years. I never understood it so, in my own case. When I had lived upwards of thirty years, I looked upon myself to stand just in the same relation to my father as I did when I was ten years old. And when I was between forty and fifty, I judged myself full as much obliged to obey my mother in every thing lawful, as I did when I was in my leading-strings.

5. But what is implied in, *Children, obey your parents in all things*? Certainly the first point of obedience is to do nothing which your father or mother forbids, whether it be great or small. Nothing is more plain, than that the prohibition of

of a parent binds every conscientious child : that is, except the thing prohibited, is clearly enjoined of God. Nor indeed is this all : the matter may be carried a little farther still. A tender parent may totally disapprove what he does not care flatly to forbid. What is the duty of a child in this case ? How far is that disapprobation to be regarded ? Whether it be equivalent to a prohibition or not, a person who would have a conscience void of offence, should undoubtedly keep on the safe side, and avoid what may perhaps be evil. It is surely the more excellent way, to do nothing which you know your parents disapprove. To act otherwise seems to imply a degree of disobedience, which one of a tender conscience would wish to avoid.

6. The second thing implied in this direction is, Do every thing which your father or mother bids, be it great or small, provided it be not contrary to any command of God. Herein God has given a power to parents, which even sovereign princes have not. The King of *England*, for instance, is a sovereign Prince : yet he has not power to bid me do the least thing, unless the law of the land requires me so to do : for he has no power but to execute the law. The will of the King is no law to the subject. But the will of the parent is a law to the child : who is bound in conscience

conscience to submit thereto, unless it be contrary to the law of God.

7. It is with admirable wisdom, that the Father of spirits has given this direction, that as the strength of the parents supplies the want of strength, and the understanding of the parents the want of understanding in their children, till they have strength and understanding of their own, so the will of the parents may guide that of their children, till they have wisdom and experience to guide themselves. This therefore is the very first thing, which children have to learn. That they are to obey their parents, to submit to their will in all things: and this they may be inured to, long before they understand the reason of it. And indeed long before they are capable of understanding any of the principles of religion. Accordingly St. Paul directs all parents to bring up their children *in the discipline and doctrine of the Lord*. For their will may be broke by proper discipline, even in their early infancy; whereas it must be a considerable time after, before they are capable of instruction. This therefore is the first point of all: bow down their wills from the very first dawn of reason; and by habituating them to your will, prepare them for submitting to the will of their Father which is in heaven.

8. But how few children do we find, even of six or eight years old, that understand any thing of this? Indeed how should they understand it, seeing they have none to teach them? Are not their parents, father as well as mother, full as ignorant of the matter as themselves? Whom do you find, even among religious people, that have the least conception of it? Have not you seen the proof of it with your own eyes! Have not you been present, when a father or mother has said, "My child, do so or so?" The child without any ceremony, answered peremptorily, "I wont." And the parent quietly passes it by, without any further notice. And does he or she not see, that by this cruel indulgence, they are training up their child, by flat rebellion against their parents, to rebellion against God? Consequently they are training him up for the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! Did they duly consider this, they would neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, till they had taught him a better lesson, and made him thoroughly afraid of ever giving that diabolical answer again.

9. Let me reason this case a little farther, with you parents that fear God. If you *do* fear God, how dare you suffer a child above a year old to say, *I will do*, what you forbid; or *I wont do* what you bid, and to go unpunished? Why do not you stop him at once, that he may never dare

dare to say so again? Have you no bowels, no compassion for your child? No regard for his salvation or destruction? Would you suffer him to curse or swear in your presence, and take no notice of it? Why disobedience is as certain a way to damnation as cursing and swearing. Stop him, stop him at first in the name of God. Do not *spare the rod*, and *spoil the child*. If you have not the heart of a tyger, do not give up your child to his own will, that is, to the devil. Though it be pain to yourself, yet pluck your offspring out of the lion's teeth. Make them submit, that they may not perish. Break their will, that you may save their soul.

10. I cannot tell how to enforce this point sufficiently. To fix it upon your minds more strongly, permit me to add part of a letter on the subject, printed some years ago.

"In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done, is to conquer their will. To inform their understanding is a work of time, and must proceed by slow degrees: but the subduing the will is a thing which must be done at once: and the sooner the better. For, by our neglecting timely correction, they contract a stubbornness, which is hardly ever to be conquered; and never without using that severity, which would be as painful to us as to the children. Therefore I call those cruel parents, who

pass for kind and indulgent: who permit their children to contract habits, which they know must be afterwards broken.

"I insist upon conquering the wills of children betimes; because this is the only foundation for a religious education. When this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason of its parent, till its own understanding comes to maturity.

"I cannot yet dismiss this subject. As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children, insures their after-wretchedness and irreligion; and whatever checks and mortifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident, if we consider that religion is nothing else but the doing the will of God, and not our own: and that self-will being the grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness, no indulgence of it can be trivial; no denial of it unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone. So that the parent who studies to subdue it in his children, works together with God in the saving of a soul: the parent who indulges it, does the devil's work, makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable; and does all that in him lies, to damn his child, soul and body for ever!

"This

"This therefore I cannot but earnestly repeat, break their wills betimes. Begin this great work before they can run alone, before they can speak plain, or perhaps speak at all. Whatever pains it cost, conquer their stubbornness: break the will, if you would not damn the child. I conjure you not to neglect, not to delay this! Therefore,

1. Let a child from a year old, be taught to fear the rod and to cry softly. In order to this,
2. Let him have nothing he cries for, absolutely nothing, great or small; else you undo your own work.
3. At all events, from that age, make him do as he is bid, if you whip him ten times running to effect it: let none persuade you, it is cruelty to do this: it is cruelty not to do it. Break his will now, and his soul will live, and he will probably bless you to all eternity."

11. On the contrary, how dreadful are the consequences of that accursed kindness, which gives children their own wills, and does not bow down their necks from their infancy. It is chiefly owing to this, that so many religious parents bring up their children that have no religion at all: children that when they are grown up, have no regard for them: perhaps set them at naught, and are ready to pick out their eyes! Why is this, but because their wills were not broken at first, because they were not inured from their early infancy, to obey their parents

in all things, and to submit to their wills, as to the will of God? Because they were not taught from the very first dawn of reason, that the will of their parents was to them the will of God: that to resist it was rebellion against God, and an inlet to all ungodliness.

II. 1. This may suffice for the explication of the text: I proceed to the application of it. And permit me first to apply to you that are parents, and as such concerned to teach your children. Do you know these things yourselves? Are *you* thoroughly convinced of these important truths? Have you laid them to heart? And have you put them in practice, with regard to your own children? Have you inured them to discipline, before they were capable of instruction? Have you broken their wills from their earliest infancy? And do you still continue so to do, in opposition both to nature and custom? Did you explain to them, as soon as their understanding began to open, the reasons of your proceeding thus? Did you point out to them the will of God, as the sole law of every intelligent creature? And shew them, it is the will of God, that they should obey you in all things? Do you inculcate this over and over again, till they perfectly comprehend it? O never be weary of this labour

labour of love: and your labour will not always be in vain.

2. At least do not teach them to disobey, by rewarding them for disobedience. Remember! You do this every time you give them any thing, because they cry for it. And herein they are apt scholars: if you reward them for crying, they will certainly cry again. So that there is no end, unless you make it a sacred rule, to give them nothing which they cry for. And the shortest way to do this, is, Never suffer them to cry aloud. Train them up to obedience in this one instance, and you will easily bring them to obey in others. Why should you not begin to-day? Surely you see what is the most excellent way: best for your own soul. Why then do you disobey? Because you are a coward; because you want resolution. And doubtless it requires no small patience, more than nature ever gave. But the grace of God is sufficient for you: you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you. This grace is sufficient to give you diligence, as well as resolution: otherwise laziness will be as great a hinderance as cowardice. For without much pains you cannot conquer: nothing can be done with a slack hand, labour on: never tire: lay line upon line, till patience has its perfect work.

3. But

3. But there is another hinderance that is full as hard to be conquered as either laziness or cowardice. It is called fondness, and is usually mistaken for love: but O, how widely different from it! It is real hate: and hate of the most mischievous kind, tending to destroy both body and soul in hell! O give not way to it any longer, no not for a moment! Fight against it with your might! For the love of God; for the love of your children; for the love of your own soul!

4. I have one word more to say to parents; to mothers in particular. If in spite of all the Apostle can say, you encourage your children by your example, to *adorn themselves with gold, or pearls, or costly apparel*, you and they must drop into the pit together. But if they do it, though you set them a better example, still it is yours, as well as their fault. For if you did not put any ornament on your little child that you would not wear yourself (which would be utter distraction, and far more inexcusable than putting it on your own arms or head) yet you did not inure them to obey you from their infancy, and teach them the duty of it, from at least two years old. Otherwise they would not have dared to do any thing great or small, contrary to your will. Whenever therefore I see the fine-dressed daughter of a plain-dressed mother, I see at once the
 mother

mother is defective either in knowledge or religion. Either she is ignorant of her own or her child's duty; or she has not practised what she knows.

5. I cannot dismiss this subject yet. I am pained continually, at seeing religious parents suffer their children to run into the same folly of dress, as if they had no religion at all. In God's name, why do you suffer them to vary a hair's breadth from *your* example? "Why, they will do it?" They will! Whose fault is that? Why did not you break their will from their infancy? At least do it now: better late than never. It should have been done before they were two years old. It may be done at eight or ten, though with far more difficulty. However do it now: and accept that difficulty, as the just reward for your past neglect. Now at least carry your point whatever it costs. Be not mealy-mouthed, say not, like foolish *Eli*, *Nay, my children; it is no good report which I hear of you*; instead of restraining them with a strong hand; but speak (though as calmly as possible, yet) firmly and peremptorily, "I will have it so;" and do as you say. Instil diligently into them the love of plain dress, and hatred of finery. Shew them the reason of your own plainness of dress, and shew it is equally reasonable for them. Bid defiance to indolence, to cowardice, to foolish fondness, and

and at all events, carry your point; if you love their souls, make and keep them just as plain as yourselves. And I charge you, grandmothers, before God, do not hinder your daughters herein. Do not dare to give the child any thing which the mother denies. Never take the part of the children against the parent; never blame her before them. If you do not strengthen her authority, as you ought to do, at least do not weaken it: but if you have either sense or piety left, help her on in the work of real kindness.

6. Permit me now to apply myself to you, Children: particularly, you that are the children of religious parents. Indeed if you have no fear of God before your eyes, I have no concern with you at present: but if you have, if you really fear God, and have a desire to please him, you desire to understand all his commandments, the fifth in particular. Did you ever understand it yet? Do you now understand what is your duty to your father and mother? Do you know, at least do you consider, That by the divine appointment *their* will is a law to *you*? Have you ever considered the extent of that obedience to your parents which God requires? *Children, obey your parents* in all things? No exception, but of things unlawful. Have you practised your duty in this extent? Did you ever so much as intend it?

7. Deal

7. Deal faithfully with your own souls. Is your conscience now clear in this matter? Do you do nothing which you know to be contrary to the will either of your father or mother? Do you never do any thing (though ever so much inclined to it) which he or she forbids? Do you abstain from every thing which they dislike, as far as you can in conscience? On the other hand, are you careful to do, whatever a parent bids? Do you study and contrive how to please them? To make their lives as easy and pleasant as you can? Whoever you are that add this to your general care, to please God in all things, Blessed art thou of the Lord! *Thy days shall be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

8. But as for you who are little concerned about this matter, who do not make it a point of conscience, to obey your parents in all things, but sometimes obey them, as it happens, and sometimes not, who frequently do what they forbid or disapprove, and neglect what they bid you do: suppose you awake out of sleep, that you begin to feel yourself a sinner, and begin to cry to God for mercy, is it any wonder that you find no answer, while you are under the guilt of unrepented sin? How can you expect mercy from God till you obey your parents? But suppose you have, by an uncommon miracle of mercy, tasted

tasted of the pardoning love of God, can it be expected, although you hunger and thirst after righteousness, after the perfect love of God, that you should ever attain it, ever be satisfied therewith, while you live in outward sin, in the wilful transgression of a known law of God, in disobedience to your parents? Is it not rather a wonder, that he has not withdrawn his Holy Spirit from you? That he still continues to strive with you, though you continually grieve his spirit? O grieve him no more! By the grace of God obey them in all things from this moment! As soon as you come home, as soon as you set foot within the door, begin an entirely new course: look upon your father and mother with new eyes: see them as representing your father which is in heaven. Endeavour, study, rejoice, to please, to help, to obey them in all things. Behave not barely as their child, but as their servant for Christ's sake. O how will you then love one another! In a manner unknown before. God will bless you to them and them to you: all around will feel that God is with you of a truth. Many shall see it and praise God: and the fruit of it shall remain, when both you and they are lodged in Abraham's bosom.



On Obedience to Pastors.

A

S E R M O N

On H E B R E W S xiii. 17.



VOL VIII.

E





H E B R E W S xiii. 17.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch over your souls, as they that shall give account, that they may do this with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.

1. **E**XCEEDING few, not only among nominal Christians, but among truly religious men, have any clear conception of the important doctrine, which is here delivered by the Apostle. Very many scarce think of it, and hardly know that there is any such direction in the Bible. And the greater part of those who know it is there, and imagine they follow it, do not understand it, but lean too much either to the right hand or to the left, to one extreme or the other. It is well known to what an extravagant height the Romanists in general carry this direction. Many of them believe an implicit faith is due to the doctrines delivered by those that rule over

them, and that implicit obedience ought to be paid, to whatever commands they give: and not much less has been insisted on, by several eminent men of the Church of *England*. Although it is true that the generality of Protestants are apt to run to the other extreme: allowing their Pastors no authority at all, but making them both the creatures and the servants of their congregations. And very many there are of our own Church who agree with them herein: supposing the Pastors to be altogether dependent upon the people; who in their judgment have a right to direct, as well as to chuse their Ministers.

2. But is it not possible, to find a medium between these two extremes? Is there any necessity for us to run, either into one or into the other? If we set human laws out of the question, and simply attend to the oracles of God, we may certainly discover a middle path, in this important matter. In order thereto, let us carefully examine the words of the Apostle above recited. Let us consider,

I. Who are the persons mentioned in the text, *they that rule over us?*

Secondly, Who are they whom the Apostle directs, to *obey and submit themselves* to them?

Thirdly,

Thirdly, What is the meaning of this direction? In what sense are they to *obey and submit themselves*? I shall then endeavour to make a suitable application of the whole.

I. 1. Consider we, first, Who are the persons mentioned in the text, *they that have the rule over you*? I do not conceive that the words of the Apostle are properly translated; because this translation makes the sentence little better than tautology. If they *rule over you*, you are certainly ruled by them: so that according to this translation, you are only enjoined to do what you do already: to obey those whom you do obey. Now there is another meaning of the Greek word, which seems abundantly more proper: it means to *guide*, as well as to rule. And thus, it seems, it should be taken here. The direction then, when applied to our spiritual guides, is plain and pertinent.

2. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the seventh verse; which fixes the meaning of this. "Remember *them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God*." The Apostle here shews, by the latter clause of the sentence, whom he meant in the former. Those that *were over them* were the same persons *who spoke unto them the word of God*: that is, they

were their Pastors, those who guided and fed this part of the flock of Christ.

3. But by whom are these guides to be appointed? And what are they supposed to do, in order to be entitled to the obedience which is here prescribed?

Volumes upon volumes have been wrote on that knotty question, "By whom are guides of souls to be appointed?" I do not intend here, to enter at all, into the dispute concerning Church-Government: neither to debate, whether it be advantageous or prejudicial to the interest of true religion, that the Church and State should be blended together, as they have been ever since the time of *Constantine*, in every part of the Roman Empire, where Christianity has been received. Waving all these points, (which may find employment enough for men that abound in leisure) by them that guide you I mean, them that do it, if not by your choice, at least by your consent: them that you willingly accept of to be your guides, in the way to heaven.

4. But what are they supposed to do, in order to entitle them to the obedience here prescribed?

They are supposed to go before the flock, (as is the manner of the Eastern Shepherds to this day) and to guide them in all the ways of truth and holiness: they are to *nourish them with the words of eternal life*, to feed them with *the pure milk*

milk of the word: applying it continually *for doctrine*, teaching them all the essential doctrines contained therein: *for reproof*, warning them if they turn aside from the way to the right hand or to the left: *for correction*, shewing them how to amend what is amiss, and guiding them back into the way of peace: and *for instruction in righteousness*, training them up to outward holiness, until they come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

5. They are supposed to *watch over your souls, as those that shall give account. As those that shall give account!* How unspeakably solemn, and awful are those words! May God write them upon the heart of every guide of souls!

They watch, waking while others sleep over the flock of Christ; over the souls that he has bought with a price, that he has purchased with his own blood. They have them in their hearts both by day and by night; regarding neither sleep nor food in comparison of them. Even while they sleep, their heart is waking, full of concern for their beloved children. *They watch* with deep earnestness, with uninterrupted seriousness, with unwearied care, patience and diligence, as they that are about to give an account of every particular soul, to him that standeth at the door, to the Judge of quick and dead.

II. 1. We are, Secondly, to consider, Who those are whom the Apostle directs to obey them that have the rule over them? And in order to determine this, with certainty and clearness, we shall not appeal to human institutions, but simply, (as in answering the preceding question) appeal to that decision of it, which we find in the oracles of God. Indeed we have hardly occasion to go one step farther than the text itself. Only it may be proper, first to remove out of the way some popular opinions, which have been almost every where taken for granted, but can in no-wise be proved.

2. It is usually supposed, first, That the Apostle is here directing *Parishioners* to obey and submit themselves to the *Minister* of their Parish. But can any one bring the least shadow of proof for this from the Holy Scripture! Where is it written, that we are bound to obey any Minister, because we live in what is called his Parish? "Yes, you say, we are bound to *obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.*" True, in all things indifferent; but this is not so: it is exceeding far from it. It is far from being a thing indifferent to *me*, Who is the guide of my soul. I dare not receive one as my guide to heaven, that is himself in the high road to hell. I dare not take a wolf for my shepherd, that has not so much as sheep's clothing; that is a common swearer,

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an open drunkard, a notorious sabbath-breaker. And such (the more is the shame, and the more the pity) are many Parochial Ministers at this day.

3. "But are you not properly members of that congregation, to which your parents belong?" I do not apprehend that I am: I know no scripture that obliges me to this. I owe all deference to the commands of my parents, and willingly obey them in all things lawful. But it is not lawful to *call them Rabbi*, that is, to believe or obey them implicitly. Every one must give an account of himself to God. Therefore every man must judge for himself: especially in a point of so deep importance as this is, the choice of a guide for his soul.

4. But we may bring this matter to a short issue, by recurring to the very words of the text. They that have voluntarily connected themselves with such a Pastor, as answers the description given therein: such as do in fact watch over their souls, as they that shall give account: such as do nourish them up with the words of eternal life; such as feed them as with the pure milk of the word, and constantly apply it to them for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness: all who have found and chosen guides of this character, of this spirit
and

and behaviour, are undoubtedly required by the Apostle, to *obey and submit themselves* to them.

III. 1. But what is the meaning of this direction? This remains to be considered. In what sense, and how far does the Apostle direct them, to *obey and submit to their spiritual guides*?

If we attend to the proper sense of the two words here used by the Apostle, we may observe that the former of them (*πειθετε* from *πειθω* to persuade) refers to the understanding, the latter, *υπακούετε* to the will and outward behaviour. To begin with the former. What influence ought our spiritual guides to have over our understanding? We dare no more call our spiritual fathers Rabbi, than the *fathers of our flesh*. We dare no more yield implicit faith to the former than to the latter. In this sense *one is our Master* (or rather *Teacher*) *who is in heaven*. But whatever submission, of even our understanding is short of this, we may, nay, we ought to yield to them.

2. To explain this a little farther. St. James uses a word which is nearly allied to the former of these. *The wisdom which is from above is ευπειθής easy to be convinced, or to be persuaded*. Now if we ought to have and to shew this wisdom toward all men; we ought to have it in a

more

more eminent degree, and to shew it upon every occasion, toward those that *watch over our souls*. With regard to these, above all other men, we should be *easy to be intreated*: easily convinced of any truth, and easily persuaded to any thing that is not sinful.

3. A word of nearly the same import with this, is frequently used by St. *Paul*; namely, *ἐπεικὴς*. In our translation, it is more than once rendered *gentle*. But perhaps it might be more properly rendered, (if the word may be allowed) *yielding*; ready to *yield*, to give up our own will, in every thing that is not a point of duty. This amiable temper every real Christian enjoys, and shews in his intercourse with all men. But he shews it in a peculiar manner, toward those that watch over his soul. He is not only willing to receive any instruction from them, to be convinced of any thing which he did not know before; to lie open to their advice, and glad to receive admonition, or reproof: but is ready to give up his own will, whenever he can do it with a clear conscience. Whatever they desire him to do, he does; if it be not forbidden in the word of God. Whatever they desire him to refrain from, he does so; if it be not enjoined in the word of God. This is implied in those words of the Apostle, *Submit yourselves to them: yield to them*: give up your own will. This is meet, and right, and your bounden

bounden duty, if they do indeed watch over your souls, as they that shall give account. If you do thus *obey and submit yourselves to them*, they will give an account of you *with joy; not with groaning*, as they must otherwise do: for although they should be clear of your blood, yet *that would be unprofitable to you*: yea, a prelude to eternal damnation.

4. How acceptable to God was an instance of obedience, somewhat similar to this! You have a large and particular account of it, in the thirty-fifth chapter of *Jeremiah*. *The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying, Go to the house of the Rechabites, and give them wine to drink. Then I took the whole house of the Rechabites (all the heads of their families) and set before them pots full of wine, and said unto them, Drink ye wine: but they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab, a great man in the reign of Jehu, the son of Rechab, from whom we are named, being the father of our family, commanded us, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever. And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab our father, in all that he charged us.* We do not know any particular reason why *Jonadab* gave this charge to his posterity. But as it was not sinful, they gave this strong instance of gratitude to their great benefactor. And how pleasing this was to the Father of their spirits, we learn from the words

words that follow. *And Jeremiah said unto the Rechabites, Because ye have obeyed the voice of Jonadab, your father, therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Jonadab shall not want a man to stand before my face for ever.*

5. Now it is certain, Christians owe full as much gratitude and obedience, to those that watch over their souls, as ever the house of the *Rechabites* owed to *Jonadab* the son of *Rechab*. And we cannot doubt, but he is as well pleased with our obedience to these, as ever he was with their obedience to *Jonadab*. If he was so well-pleased with the gratitude and obedience of this people to their temporal benefactor, have we not all reason to believe, He is full as well-pleased with the gratitude and obedience of Christians, to those who derive far greater blessings to them, than ever *Jonadab* conveyed to his posterity?

6. It may be of use yet again to consider, In what instances it is the duty of Christians to obey and submit themselves to those that watch over their souls. Now the things which they enjoin, must be either enjoined of God, or forbidden by him, or indifferent. In things forbidden of God we dare not obey them; for we are to obey God rather than man. In things enjoined of God, we do not properly obey Them, but our common Father. Therefore if we are to obey them at all,

it must be in things indifferent. The sum is, It is the duty of every private Christian, to obey his spiritual Pastor, by either doing or leaving undone any thing of an indifferent nature; any thing that is in no way determined in the word of God.

7. But how little is this understood in the *Protestant* world? At least, in *England* and *Ireland*? Who is there, even among those, that are supposed to be good Christians; who dreams there is such a duty as this? And yet there is not a more express command, either in the Old or New Testament. No words can be more clear and plain; no command more direct and positive. Therefore certainly none who receive the scripture as the word of God, can live in the habitual breach of this, and plead innocence. Such an instance of wilful, or at least careless disobedience, must grieve the Holy Spirit of God. It cannot but hinder the grace of God from having its full effect upon the heart. It is not improbable, that this very disobedience may be one cause of the deadness of many souls: one reason of their not receiving those blessings, which they seek with some degree of sincerity.

8. It remains only, to make a short application of what has now been delivered.

You

You that read this, do you apply it to yourself? Do you examine yourself thereby? Do not you stop your own growth in grace, if not by wilful disobedience to this command; yet by careless inattention to it, by not considering it, as the importance of it deserves? If so, you defraud yourself of many blessings, which you might enjoy. Or, are you of a better mind, of a more excellent spirit? Is it your fixt resolution and your constant endeavour, *to obey them that have the rule over you in the Lord?* To submit yourself as cheerfully to your spiritual, as to your natural parents? Do you ask, "Wherein should I submit to them?" The answer has been given already: not in things enjoined of God: not in things forbidden by him; but in things indifferent: in all that are not determined one way or the other, by the oracles of God. It is true, this cannot be done in some instances, without a considerable degree of self-denial, when they advise you to refrain from something that is agreeable to flesh and blood. And it cannot be obeyed in other instances, without taking up your cross: without suffering some pain or inconvenience, that is not agreeable to flesh and blood. For that solemn declaration of our Lord has place here, as well as on a thousand other occasions, *Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple.* But this

will not affright you, if you resolve to be, not only almost, but altogether a Christian: if you determine to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.

9. I would now apply myself in a more particular manner to *you*, who desire *me* to watch over your souls. Do *you* make it a point of conscience, to *obey* me, for my Master's sake? To *submit yourselves to me* in things indifferent; things not determined in the word of God? In all things that are not enjoined, nor yet forbidden in Scripture. Are you *easy to be intreated*, as by men in general, so by me in particular? Easy to be convinced of any truth, however contrary to your former prejudices? And easy to be persuaded to do or forbear any indifferent thing at *my* desire? You cannot but see, that all this is clearly contained in the very words of the text. And you cannot but acknowledge, that it is highly reasonable for you so to do, if I do employ all my time, all my substance, all my strength both of body and soul, not in seeking my own honour, or pleasure; but in promoting your present and eternal salvation: if I do indeed *watch over your souls as one that must give account*.

10. Do you then take my advice (I ask in the presence of God and all the world) with regard to *dress*? I published that advice above thirty years ago: I have repeated it a thousand times since.

I have

I have advised you not to be conformable to the world herein: to lay aside all needless ornaments; to avoid all expence; to be patterns of plainness to all that are round about you. Have you taken this advice? Have you all, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, laid aside all those needless ornaments, which I particularly objected to? Are you all exemplarily plain in your apparel? As plain as Quakers (so called) or Moravians! If not, if you are still dressed like the generality of people of your own rank and fortune, you declare hereby to all the world, that you will not obey them that are over you in the Lord. You declare, in open defiance of God and man, that you will not *submit yourselves* to them. Many of you carry your sins on your forehead, openly and in the face of the sun. You harden your hearts against instruction and against conviction: you harden one another; especially those of you that were once convinced, and have now stifled your convictions. You encourage one another, to stop your ears against the truth, and shut your eyes against the light, lest haply you should see, that you are fighting against God, and against your own souls. If I were now called to give an account of you, it would be *with groans, and not with joy*. And sure that would be *unprofitable for you*: the loss would fall upon your own head.

11. I speak all this on supposition (though that is a supposition not to be made) that the Bible was silent on this head: that the Scripture said nothing concerning *dress*, and left it to every one's own discretion. But if all other texts were silent, this is enough, *Submit yourselves to them that are over you in the Lord*. I bind this upon your consciences, in the sight of God. Were it only in obedience to this direction, you cannot be clear before God, unless you throw aside all needless ornaments, in utter defiance of that tyrant of fools, fashion; unless you seek only to be adorned with good works, as men and women professing godliness.

12. Perhaps you will say, "This is only a little thing: it is a mere trifle." I answer, If it be, you are the more inexcusable before God and man. What! Will you disobey a plain commandment of God for *a mere trifle*? God forbid! Is it a trifle, to sin against God? To set his authority at nought? Is this a little thing? Nay, remember, There can be no little sin, till we can find a little god! Mean time be assured of one thing: the more conscientiously you obey your spiritual guides, the more powerfully will God apply the word, which they speak in his name to your heart! The more plentifully will he water what is spoken, with the dew of his blessing: and the more proofs will you have, it is not only they that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in them.



On visiting the Sick.

A

S E R M O N

On M A T T. xxv. 36.





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M A T T. xxv. 36.

I was sick, and ye visited me.

1. **I**T is generally supposed that *the means of grace and the ordinances of God* are equivalent terms. We commonly mean by that expression, those that are usually termed, *Works of piety*, namely, hearing and reading the Scripture, receiving the Lord's Supper, public and private prayer, and fasting. And it is certain, these are the ordinary channels which convey the grace of God to the souls of men. But are they the only means of grace? Are there no other means than these, whereby God is pleased, frequently, yea ordinarily to convey his grace to them that either love or fear him? Surely there are works of mercy, as well as works of piety, which are real means of grace. They are more especially such to those that perform them with a single eye. And those that neglect them, do not receive the grace which otherwise they might. Yea, and they

they lose, by a continual neglect, the grace which they had received. Is it not hence, that many who were once strong in faith, are now weak and feeble-minded? And yet they are not sensible whence that weakness comes, as they neglect none of the ordinances of God. But they might see whence it comes, were they seriously to consider St. Paul's account of all true believers. *We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we might walk therein,* Eph. ii. 10.

2. The walking herein is essentially necessary, as to the continuance of that faith whereby we are already saved by grace, so to the attainment of everlasting salvation. Of this we cannot doubt, if we seriously consider, that these are the very words of the great Judge himself, *Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat, thirsty and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me,* Matt. xxv. 34, &c. *Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* If this does not convince you that the continuance in works of mercy, is necessary to salvation; consider, what the Judge of all says to those on the left hand.

Depart,

Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these, neither have ye done it unto me. You see were it for this alone, they must depart from God into everlasting punishment.

3. Is it not strange, that this important truth should be so little understood, or at least should so little influence the practice of them that fear God? Suppose this representation be true, suppose the Judge of all the earth speaks right, those and those only that feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, relieve the stranger, visit those that are in prison, according to their power and opportunity, shall *inherit the everlasting kingdom*. And those that do not, shall *depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*.

4. I purpose at present to confine my discourse to one article of these, *visiting the sick*: a plain duty, which all that are in health may practise, in a higher or lower degree: and which nevertheless is almost universally neglected, even by those that profess to love God. And touching this I would enquire, First, What is implied in
visiting

visiting the sick? Secondly, How is it to be performed, and Thirdly, By whom?

I. First, I would enquire, What is the nature of this duty? What is implied in *visiting the sick*?

1. By the sick I do not mean only those that keep their bed, or that are sick in the strictest sense. Rather I would include, all such as are in a state of affliction, whether of mind or body: and that, whether they are good or bad, whether they fear God or not.

“But is there need of visiting them in person? May we not relieve them at a distance? Does it not answer the same purpose, if we send them help, as if we carry it ourselves?” Many are so circumstanced, that they cannot attend the sick in person; and where this is the real case, it is undoubtedly sufficient for them to send help, being the only expedient they can use. But this is not properly *visiting the sick*: it is another thing. The word which we render *visit*, in its literal acceptation, means to *look upon*. And this, you well know, cannot be done, unless you are present with them. To send them assistance is therefore entirely a different thing from visiting them. The former then ought to be done, but the latter not left undone.

“But

"But I send a Physician to those that are sick: and he can do them more good than I can." He can in one respect: he can do them more good, with regard to their bodily health. But he cannot do them more good with regard to their souls, which are of infinitely greater importance. And if he could, this would not excuse *you*: his going would not fulfil *your* duty. Neither would it do the same good to *you*, unless you saw them with your own eyes. If you do not you lose a means of grace: you lose an excellent means of increasing your thankfulness to God, who saves you from this pain and sickness, and continues your health and strength: as well as of increasing your sympathy with the afflicted, your benevolence, and all social affections.

3. One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor, is because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is, that, according to the common observation, one part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it: and then plead their voluntary ignorance, as an excuse for their hardness of heart. "Indeed, Sir, (said a person of large substance) I am a very compassionate man. But to tell you the truth, I do not know any body in the world that is in want." How did this come

to pass? Why, he took good care to keep out of their way. And if he fell upon any of them un-
awares, he passed over on the other side.

4. How contrary to this is both the spirit and behaviour of even people of the highest rank in a neighbouring nation! In *Paris*, Ladies of the first quality, yea, Princesses of the blood, of the Royal Family, constantly visit the sick, particularly the patients in the Grand Hospital. And they not only take care to relieve their wants, (if they need any thing more than is provided for them) but attend on their sick-beds, dress their sores, and perform the meanest offices for them. Here is a pattern for the English, poor or rich, mean or honourable! For many years we have abundantly copied after the follies of the French. Let us for once copy after their wisdom and virtue, worthy the imitation of the whole Christian world. Let not the gentlewomen, or even the Countesses in *England*, be ashamed to imitate those Princesses of the blood! Here is a fashion that does honour to human nature. It began in *France*; but God forbid it should end there!

5. And if your delicacy will not permit you to imitate those truly honourable Ladies; by abasing yourselves in the manner which they do, by performing the lowest offices for the sick; you may however, without humbling yourselves so far, supply them with whatever they want. And you
 may

may administer help of a more excellent kind, by supplying their spiritual wants : instructing them (if they need such instruction) in the first principles of religion : endeavouring to shew them the dangerous state they are in, under the wrath and curse of God through sin, and point to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. Beside this general instruction, you might have abundant opportunities, of comforting those that are in pain of body or distress of mind: you might find opportunities of strengthening the feeble-minded, quickening those that are faint and weary: and of building up those that have believed, and encouraging them to *go on to perfection*. But these things you must do in your own person: you see, they cannot be done by proxy. Or suppose you could give the same relief to the sick by another, you could not reap the same advantage to yourself. You could not gain that increase in lowliness, in patience, in tenderness of spirit, in sympathy with the afflicted, which you might have gained, if you had assisted them in person. Neither would you receive the same recompence in the resurrection of the just, when *every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour*.

II. 1. I proceed to enquire in the second place,
How are we to visit them? In what manner

may this labour of love be most effectually performed? How may we do this, most to the glory of God, and the benefit of our neighbour? But before ever you enter upon the work, you should be deeply convinced, that you are by no means sufficient for it: you have neither sufficient grace, nor sufficient understanding, to perform it in the most excellent manner. And this will convince you of the necessity of applying to the Strong for strength, and of flying to the Father of lights, the giver of every good gift, for wisdom: ever remembering, *There is a spirit in man that giveth wisdom, and the inspiration of the Holy One that giveth understanding.* Whenever therefore you are about to enter upon the work, seek his help by earnest prayer. Cry to him for the whole spirit of humility, lest if pride steal into your heart if you ascribe any thing to yourself, while you strive to save others you destroy your own soul. Before and through the work, from the beginning to the end, let your heart wait upon him for a continual supply of meekness and gentleness, of patience and long-suffering, that you may never be angry or discouraged, at whatever treatment rough or smooth, kind or unkind, you may meet with. Be not moved with the deep ignorance of some, the dulness, the amazing stupidity of others: marvel not at their peevishness or stubbornness, at their non-improvement

after

after all the pains that you have taken; yea, at some of them turning back to perdition, and being worse than they were before. Still your record is with the Lord, and your reward with the Most High.

2. As to the particular method of treating the sick. You need not tie yourself down to any; but may continually vary your manner of proceeding, as various circumstances may require. But it may not be amiss, usually to begin with enquiring into their outward condition. You may ask, Whether they have the necessaries of life? Whether they have sufficient food and raiment? If the weather be cold, Whether they have fewel? Whether they have needful attendance? Whether they have proper advice, with regard to their bodily disorder; especially if it be of a dangerous kind? In several of these respects you may be able to give them some assistance yourself: and you may move those that are more able than you, to supply your lack of service. You might properly say in your own case, "To beg I am ashamed:" but never be ashamed to beg for the poor; yea, in this case, be an importunate beggar: do not easily take a denial. Use all the address, all the understanding, all the influence you have: at the same time trusting in him that has the hearts of all men in his hands.

3. You will then easily discern, whether there is any good office, which you can do for them with your hands. Indeed most of the things which are needful to be done, those about them can do better than you. But in some you may have more skill, or more experience than them. And if you have, let not delicacy or honour stand in your way. Remember his word, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me.* And think nothing too mean to do for him! Rejoice to be abased for his sake!

4. These little labours of love will pave your way to things of greater importance. Having shewn that you have a regard for their bodies you may proceed to enquire concerning their souls. And here you have a large field before you: you have scope for exercising all the talents which God has given you. May you not begin with asking, Have you ever considered, that God governs the world? that his Providence is over all? and over *you* in particular? Does any thing then befall you without his knowledge? or without his designing it for your good? He knows all you suffer: he knows all your pains: he sees all your wants. He sees, not only your affliction in general, but every particular circumstance of it. Is he not looking down from heaven, and disposing all these things for your profit?

You

You may then enquire, whether he is acquainted with the general principles of religion? And afterwards lovingly and gently examine, Whether his life has been agreeable thereto? Whether he has been an outward, barefaced sinner, or has had a form of religion? See next whether he knows any thing of the power? Of worshipping God *in spirit and in truth*. If he does not, endeavour to explain to him *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord: and Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. When he begins to understand the nature of holiness, and the necessity of the New Birth, then you may press upon him *repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*.

5. When you find any of them begin to fear God, it will be proper to give them one after another, some plain tracts, as the Instructions for Christians, Awake thou that sleepest, and the Nature and Design of Christianity. At the next visit you may enquire, What they have read? what they remember? and what they understand? And then will be the time to enforce what they understand, and if possible, impress it on their hearts. Be sure to conclude every meeting with prayer. If you cannot yet pray without a form, you may use some of those composed by Mr. *Spinckes*, or any other pious writer. But the sooner you break through this backwardness,

ness, the better. Ask of God, and he will open your mouth.

6. Together with the more important lessons, which you endeavour to teach all the poor whom you visit, it would be a deed of charity to teach them two things more, which they are generally little acquainted with: industry and cleanliness. It was said by a pious man, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Indeed the want of it is a scandal to all religion; causing the way of truth to be evil spoken of. And without industry we are neither fit for this world, nor for the world to come. With regard to both, *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*

III. 1. The third point to be considered, is, By whom is this duty to be performed? The answer is ready, By all that desire to *inherit the kingdom* of their Father, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. For thus saith the Lord, *Come ye blessed—inherit the kingdom—For I was sick and ye visited me.* And to those on the left hand, *Depart, ye cursed—for I was sick and ye visited me not.* Does not this plainly imply, that as all who do this, are *blessed and shall inherit the kingdom*: so all who do it not, are *curled*, and shall depart into everlasting fire.

2. All therefore who desire to escape everlasting fire, and to inherit the everlasting kingdom, are equally concerned, according to their power, to practise this important duty. It is equally incumbent on young and old, rich and poor, men and women, according to their ability. None are so young, if they desire to save their own souls, as to be excused from assisting their neighbours. None are so poor (unless they want the necessaries of life) but they are called to do something more or less, at whatever time they can spare, for the relief and comfort of their afflicted fellow-sufferers.

3. But those *who are rich in this world*, who have more than the conveniences of life, are peculiarly called of God to this blessed work, and pointed out to it by his gracious providence. As you are not under a necessity of working for your bread, you have your time at your own disposal. You may therefore allot some part of it every day for this labour of love. If it be practicable it is far best to have a fixed hour, (for "any time, we say, is no time,") and not to employ that time in any other business, without urgent necessity. You have likewise a peculiar advantage over many, by your station in life. Being superior in rank to them, you have the more influence on that very account. Your inferiors of course look up to you with a kind of reverence.

rence. And the condescension which you shew in visiting them, gives them a prejudice in your favour, which inclines them to hear you with attention, and willingly receive what you say. Improve this prejudice to the uttermost for the benefit of their souls, as well as their bodies. While you are eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless, see that you still keep a higher end in view, even the saving of souls from death, and that you labour to make all you say and do, subservient to that great end.

4. "But have *the poor* themselves any part or lot in this matter? Are they any way concerned in visiting the sick?" What can they give to others, who have hardly the conveniences, or perhaps necessities of life for themselves? If they have not, yet they need not be wholly excluded from the blessing which attends the practice of this duty. Even those may remember that excellent rule, "Let our conveniences give way to our neighbour's necessities; and our necessities give way to our neighbour's extremities." And few are so poor, as not to be able sometimes to give *two mites*: but if they are not, if they have no money to give, may they not give what is of more value? Yea, of more value than thousands of gold and silver? If you speak *in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, may not the words you speak be health

health to the soul, and marrow to the bones? Can you give them nothing? Nay, in administering to them the grace of God, you give them more than all this world is worth! Go on! Go on! Thou poor disciple of a poor Master! Do as he did in the days of his flesh! Whenever thou hast an opportunity, go about doing good and healing all that are oppressed of the devil: encouraging them to shake off his chains, and fly immediately to him

“Who sets the prisoners free, and breaks
The iron bondage from their necks.”

Above all, give them your prayers. Pray with them: pray for them! And who knows but you may save their souls alive?

5. You that are *old*, whose feet are ready to stumble upon the dark mountains, may not you do a little more good, before you go hence and are no more seen! O remember

“’Tis time to live, if you grow old:
Of little life the best to make,
And manage wisely the last stake!”

As you have lived many years, it may be hoped you have attained such knowledge as may be of use to others. You have certainly more knowledge
of

of men, which is commonly learnt by dear-bought experience. With what strength you have left, employ the few moments you have to spare, in ministering to those who are weaker than yourselves. Your grey hairs will not fail to give you authority, and add weight to what you speak. You may frequently urge, to increase their attention,

“Believe me, youth; for I am read in cares,
And groan beneath the weight of more than
threescore years.”

You have frequently been a sufferer yourself; perhaps you are so still. So much the more give them all the assistance you can, both with regard to their souls and bodies, before they and you go to the place whence you will not return.

6. On the other hand, you that are *young* have several advantages that are almost peculiar to yourselves. You have generally a flow of spirits, and a liveliness of temper, which, by the grace of God, make you willing to undertake, and capable of performing many good works, at which others would be discouraged. And you have your health and strength of body, whereby you are eminently qualified, to assist the sick and those that have no strength. You are able to take up

and carry the crosses, which may be expected to lie in the way. Employ then your whole vigour of body and mind, in ministering to your afflicted brethren. And bless God that you have them to employ, in so honourable a service: like those heavenly *servants of his that do his pleasure*, by continually ministering to the heirs of salvation.

7. "But may not *women* as well as men, bear a part in this honourable service?" Undoubtedly they may: nay, they ought: it is their meet, right and their bounden duty. Herein there is no difference: *there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus*. Indeed it has long passed for a maxim with many, that "Women are only to be seen; not heard." And accordingly many of them are brought up in such a manner, as if they were only designed for agreeable play-things! But is this doing honour to the sex? Or is it a real kindness to them? No; it is the deepest unkindness: it is horrid cruelty: it is mere Turkish barbarity. And I know not how any woman of sense and spirit can submit to it. Let all you that have it in your power assert the right, which the God of nature has given you. Yield not to that vile bondage any longer. You, as well as men, are rational creatures. You, like them, were made in the image of God: you are equally candidates for immortality. You too are called of God, as you have time, to *do good unto*

all men. Be not disobedient to the heavenly calling. Whenever you have opportunity, do all the good you can, particularly to your poor sick neighbour. And every one of you likewise shall receive your own reward according to your own labour.

8. It is well known, that in the Primitive Church, there were women particularly appointed for this work. Indeed there was one or more such in every Christian congregation under heaven. They were then termed *Deaconesses*, that is, *Servants*: servants of the Church and of its great Master. Such was *Phebe*, (mentioned by St. Paul, Rom. xvi. 1.), a *Deaconess of the Church of Cenchrea*. It is true, most of these were women in years, and well experienced in the work of God. But were the young wholly excluded from that service? No: neither need they be, provided they know in whom they have believed, and shew that they are holy of heart, by being holy in all manner of conversation. Such a *Deaconess*, if she answered her picture, was Mr. Law's *Miranda*. Would any one object to her visiting and relieving the sick and poor, because she was a woman? Nay, and a young one too? Do any of you that are young desire to tread in her steps? Have you a pleasing form? An agreeable address? So much the better, if you are wholly devoted to God. He will use these, if your eye be single, to make your words strike the deeper.

And

And while you minister to others, how many blessings may redound into your own bosom? Hereby your natural levity may be destroyed, your fondness for trifles cured, your wrong tempers corrected, your evil habits weakened, until they are rooted out. And you will be prepared to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, in every future scene of life, only be very wary, if you visit or converse with those of the other sex, lest your affections be entangled, on one side or the other, and so you find a curse instead of a blessing.

9. Seeing then this is a duty to which we are called, rich and poor, young and old, male and female; (and it would be well if parents would train up their children herein, as well as in saying their prayers and going to Church;) let the time past suffice that almost all of us have neglected it, as by general consent. O what need has every one of us to say, "Lord, forgive me my sins of omission!" Well, in the name of God let us now from this day set about it with general consent. And I pray, let it never go out of your mind, that this is a duty which you cannot perform by proxy: unless in one only case; unless you are disabled by your own pain or weakness. In that only case, it suffices to send the relief which you would otherwise give. Begin, my dear brethren, begin now else the impression which you now feel will wear off; and possibly, it may

never return! What then will be the consequence? Instead of hearing that word, *Come, ye blessed—For I was sick and ye visited me*: you must hear that awful sentence, *Depart, ye cursed!—For I was sick and ye visited me not!*

Preached



Preached before the Hu-
mane Society.

A

S E R M O N

On M A T T. XXV. 34.



H 3

Preached before the Hu-
mane Society.





M A T T. XXV. 34.

Come, ye blessed of my Father! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

1. **R**EASON alone will convince every fair enquirer, That God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. This alone teaches him to say, Doubtless there is a reward for the righteous: there is a God that judgeth the earth. But how little information do we receive from unassisted reason, touching the particulars contained in this general truth? As eye hath not seen, or ear heard, so neither could it naturally enter into our heart to conceive, the circumstances of that awful day, wherein God will judge the world. No information of this kind could be given, but from the great Judge himself. And what an amazing instance of condescension it is, that the Creator, the Governor, the Lord, the Judge of all, should deign to give us so clear
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and particular an account of that solemn transaction if the learned Heathen acknowledged the sublimity of that account which *Moses* gives of the Creation, what would he have said, if he had heard this account, of the Son of man coming in his glory? Here indeed is no laboured pomp of words, no ornaments of language. This would not have suited either the speaker or the occasion. But what inexpressible dignity of thought! See him *coming in the clouds of heaven! And all the angels with him!* See him *sitting on the throne of his glory, and all the nations gathered before him!* And shall he separate them, placing the good on his right hand, and the wicked on his left? *Then shall the King say—*With what admirable propriety is the expression varied? *The Son of man* comes down to judge the children of men. *The King* distributes rewards and punishments, to his obedient or rebellious subjects. *Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

2. *Prepared for you from the foundation of the world—*But does this agree with the common supposition, That God created man merely to supply the vacant thrones of the rebel angels? Does it not rather seem to imply, That he would have created man, though the angels had never fallen? Inasmuch as he then prepared the kingdom

dom

dom for his human children, when he laid the foundation of the earth.

3. *Inherit the kingdom*—as being *heirs of God, and joint heirs* with his beloved Son. It is your right, seeing I have purchased *eternal redemption for all them that obey me*. And ye did obey me in the days of your flesh. Ye *believed in the Father, and also in me*. Ye loved the Lord your God: and that love constrained you to love all mankind. Ye continued in the faith that wrought, by love. Ye shewed your faith by your works. *For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye cloathed me: I was sick, and in prison; and ye came unto me.*

4. But in what sense are we to understand the words that follow? *Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and gave thee meat? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?* They cannot be literally understood: they cannot answer in these very words: because it is not possible they should be ignorant, that God had really wrought by them. Is it not then manifest, that these words are to be taken in a figurative sense? And can they imply any more than that all which they have done will appear as nothing to them, will as it were vanish away, in view of what God their Saviour had done and suffered for them!

5. But

5. But the King shall answer and say unto them, *Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.* What a declaration this! Worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance! May the finger of the living God write it upon all our hearts!

I would take occasion from hence, first, to make a few reflections on good works in general: secondly, to consider in particular that institution, for the promotion of which we are now assembled: and in the third place, to make a short application.

I. 1. And first, I would make a few reflections upon good works in general.

I am not insensible, that many, even serious people, are jealous of all that is spoken upon this subject: nay, and whenever the necessity of good works is strongly insisted on, take for granted, that he who speaks in this manner, is but one remove from Popery. But should we, for fear of this, or of any other reproach, refrain from speaking *the truth as it is in Jesus*? Should we, on any consideration, *shun to declare the whole counsel of God*? Nay, if a false prophet could utter that solemn word, how much more may the ministers of Christ, *We cannot go beyond the word of the Lord*, to speak either more or less?

2. Is it not to be lamented, that any, who fear God, should desire us to do otherwise? And that by speaking otherwise themselves, they should occasion the way of truth to be evil spoken of? I mean, in particular, the way of salvation by faith, which on this very account is despised, nay, had in abomination by many sensible men. It is now above forty years, since this grand scriptural doctrine, *By grace ye are saved through faith*, began to be openly declared, by a few Clergymen of the Church of *England*. And not long after, some who heard, but did not understand, attempted to preach the same doctrine, but miserably mangled it, wresting the Scripture, and *making void the law through faith*.

3. Some of these in order to exalt the value of faith, have utterly deprecated good works. They speak of them as not only not necessary to salvation, but as greatly obstructive to it. They represent them as abundantly more dangerous than evil ones, to those who are seeking to save their souls. One cries aloud, "More people go to hell by praying, than by thieving." Another screams out, "Away with your works! Have done with your works, or you cannot come to Christ!" And this unscriptural, irrational, heathenish declamation is called, "Preaching the gospel!"

4. But

4. But *shall not the Judge of all the earth speak as well as do right?* Will not he be justified in his saying and clear when he is judged? Assuredly he will. And upon his authority we must continue to declare, That whenever you do good to any for his sake when you feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty; when you assist the stranger, or clothe the naked; when you visit them that are sick or in prison; these are not *splendid sins*, as one marvellously calls them; but *sacrifices, where-with God is well pleased.*

5. Not that our Lord intended, we should confine our beneficence to the bodies of men. He undoubtedly designed, that we should be equally abundant in works of spiritual mercy. He died *to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of all good works*: zealous, above all, to *save souls from death*, and thereby *hide a multitude of sins*. And this is unquestionably included in St. Paul's exhortation, *As we have time, let us do good unto all men*: good in every possible kind, as well as in every possible degree. But why does not our blessed Lord mention works of spiritual mercy? He could not do it with any propriety. It was not for him to say, "I was in error, and ye convinced me; I was in sin, and you brought me back to God." And it needed not; for in mentioning *some*, he included *all* works of mercy.

6. But

6. But may I not add one thing more, (only he that heareth, let him understand) good works are so far from being hindrances of our salvation; they are so far from being insignificant, from being of no account in Christianity, that, supposing them to spring from a right principle, they are the perfection of religion. They are the highest part of that spiritual building, whereof Jesus Christ is the foundation. To those; who attentively consider the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, it will be undeniably plain that what St. *Paul* there describes as the highest of all Christian graces, is properly and directly the love of our neighbour. And to him, who attentively considers the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament, it will be equally plain, that works springing from this love are the highest part of the religion therein revealed. Of these our Lord himself says, *Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit. Much fruit!* Does not the very expression imply the excellency of what is so termed? Is not the tree itself for the sake of the fruit? By bearing fruit, and by this alone, it attains the highest perfection it is capable of, and answers the end for which it was planted. Who, what is he then, that is called a Christian, and can speak lightly of good works?

II. 1. From these general reflections, I proceed to consider that institution in particular, for the promotion of which we are now assembled. And in doing this, I shall first observe, The rise of this institution: secondly, The success; and thirdly, The excellency of it: after which you will give me leave to make a short application.

I. On the first head, The rise of this institution, I may be very brief, as a great part of you know it already.

1. One would wonder, (as an ingenious writer observes) that such an institution as this, of so deep importance to mankind, should appear so late in the world. Have we any thing wrote upon the subject, earlier than the tract published at *Rome*, in the year 1637? And did not the proposal then sleep for many years? Were there any more than one or two attempts, and those not effectually pursued, till the year 1700? By what steps it has been since revived and carried into execution, we are now to enquire.

2. I cannot give you a clearer view of this, than by presenting you with a short extract from the introduction to the "Plan and Reports of the Society," published two years ago.

"Many and indubitable are the instances of the possibility of restoring to life persons apparently struck with sudden death, whether by an apoplexy,

plexity, convulsive fits, noxious vapours, strangling, or drowning. Cases of this nature have occurred in every country. But they were considered and *neglected*, as extraordinary phenomena, from which no salutary consequence could be drawn.

3. "At length a few benevolent gentlemen in *Holland* conjectured, that some at least might have been saved, had proper means been used in time; and formed themselves into a Society, in order to make a trial. Their attempts succeeded far beyond their expectations. Many were restored, who must otherwise have perished. And they were at length enabled to extend their plan over the seven provinces.

"Their success instigated other countries to follow their example. In the year 1768, the Magistrates of Health at *Milan* and *Venice* issued orders for the treatment of drowned persons. The city of *Hamburgh* appointed a similar ordinance to be read in all the Churches. In the year 1769, the Empress of *Germany* published an edict, extending its directions and encouragements to every case, that afforded a possibility of relief. In the year 1771, the Magistrates of *Paris* founded an institution in favour of the drowned.

4. "In the year 1773, Dr. *Cogan* translated the Memoirs of the Society at *Amsterdam*, in order to inform our countrymen of the practicability

of recovering persons apparently drowned. And Mr. *Hawes* uniting with him, these gentlemen proposed a plan for a similar institution in these kingdoms. They were soon enabled to form a Society for this excellent purpose. The plan is this.

" I. The Society will publish, in the most extensive manner possible, the proper methods of treating persons in such circumstances.

II. They will distribute a premium of two guineas among the first persons, who attempt to recover any one taken out of the water as dead. And this reward will be given, even if the attempt is unsuccessful, provided it has been pursued two hours, according to the method laid down by the Society.

III. They will distribute a premium of four guineas, where the person is restored to life.

IV. They will give one guinea to any that admits the body into his house without delay, and furnishes the necessary accommodations.

V. A number of Medical gentlemen, living near the places where these disasters commonly happen, will give their assistance gratis."

II. Such

II. Such was the *rise* of this admirable institution. With what success has it been attended, is the point which I purpose, in the next place, very briefly to consider.

And it must be allowed to be not only far greater, than those who despised it, had imagined, but greater than the most sanguine expectations of the gentlemen, who were immediately engaged in it.

In the short space from its first establishment in May 1774, to the end of December, eight persons seemingly dead were restored to life.

In the year 1775, forty-seven were restored to life: thirty-two of them by the direct encouragement and assistance of the gentlemen of this Society: and the rest by Medical gentlemen and others, in consequence of their method of treatment being generally known.

In the year 1770, forty-one persons were restored to life, by the assistance of this Society. And eleven cases of those, who had been restored elsewhere, were communicated to them.

So the number of lives preserved and restored, in two years and a half, since their first institution, amounts to one hundred and seven! Add to these, those that have been since restored, and out of two hundred and eighty-four persons, who were dead to all appearance, no less than a hundred and fifty-seven have been restored to life!

Such is the *success*, which has attended them in so short a time! Such a blessing has the gracious providence of God given to this infant undertaking!

III. 1. It remains only to shew the *excellency* of it. And this may appear from one single consideration. This institution unites together in one all the various acts of mercy. The several works of charity mentioned above are all contained in this. It comprizes all corporal (if I may so speak) and all spiritual benefits; all the instances of kindness, which can be shewn, either to the bodies or souls of men. To shew this beyond all contradiction, there needs no studied eloquence, no rhetorical colouring, but simply and nakedly to relate the thing as it is.

2. The thing attempted, and not only attempted, but actually performed, (so has the goodness of God prospered the labours of these lovers of mankind!) is no less in a qualified sense, than restoring life to the dead! is it any wonder then, that the generality of men should at first ridicule such an undertaking? That they should imagine the persons, who aimed at any such thing, must be utterly out of their senses? Indeed one of old said, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* Cannot he, who bestowed life at first, just as well

well bestow it again? But it may well be thought a thing incredible, that *man* should raise the dead! For no human power can create life. And what human power can restore it? Accordingly, when our Lord (whom the Jews at that time supposed to be a mere man) came to the house of Jairus, in order to raise his daughter from the dead, upon the first intimation of his design, *they laughed him to scorn.* The maid, said he, *is not dead, but sleepeth.* "This is rather to be called sleep than death; seeing her life is not at an end: but I will quickly awaken her out of this sleep."

3. However it is certain, she was really dead, and so beyond all power but that of the Almighty. But see what power God has now given to man! (To his name be all the praise!) See with what wisdom he has indued these sons of mercy! Teaching them to stop the parting soul, to arrest the spirit just quitting the breathless clay, and taking wing for eternity? Who hath seen such a thing? Who hath heard such things? Who hath read them in the annals of antiquity? Sons of men, *can these dry bones live?* Can this motionless heart beat again? Can this clotted blood flow any more? Can these dry, stiff vessels open, to give it passage? Can this cold flesh resume its native warmth, or those eyes again see the sun? Surely these are such things,
(might

(might one not almost say, such miracles?) as neither we of the present generation, nor our fathers had known!

5. Consider, I intreat you, how many miracles of mercy (so to speak) are contained in one! that poor man, who has lately numbered with the dead, by the care and pains of these messengers of God, again breathes the vital air, opens his eyes and stands up upon his feet. He is restored to his rejoicing family, to his wife, to his (late) helpless children, that he may again by his honest labour provide them with all the necessaries of life. See now what ye have done, ye ministers of mercy! Behold the fruit of your labour of love! Ye have been an husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless. And hereby ye have given meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, cloaths to the naked. For hungry, thirsty, and naked these little ones must have been, had not you restored him that prevents it. You have more than relieved; you have prevented that sickness, which might naturally have arisen from their want of sufficient food to eat, or raiment to put on. You have hindered those orphans from wandering up and down, not having a place where to lay their head. Nay, and very possibly you have prevented some of them from being lodged in a dreary, comfortless prison.

5. So great, so comprehensive is the mercy, which you have shewn to the bodies of your fellow-creatures! But why should their souls be left out of the account? How great are the benefits you have conferred on these also! The husband has now again an opportunity of assisting his wife, in things of the greatest moment. He may now again strengthen her hands, in God, and help her to run with patience the race that is set before her. He may again join with her in instructing their children, and training them up in the way wherein they should go; who may live to be a comfort to their aged parents, and useful members of the community.

6. Nay, it may be, you have snatched the poor man himself, not only from the jaws of death, but from sinking lower than the waters, from the jaws of everlasting destruction. It cannot be doubted, but some of those, whose lives you have restored, although they had been before without God in the world, will remember themselves, and not only with their lips, but in their lives, shew forth his praise. It is highly probable, some of these (as *one out of the ten lepers*) will return and give thanks to God, real, lasting thanks, by devoting themselves to his honourable service.

7. It is remarkable, that several of those, whom you have brought back from the margin of the

the grave, were intoxicated at the very time, when they dropped into the water. And at that very instant (which is frequently the case) they totally lost their senses. Here therefore was no place for, no possibility of repentance. They had not time, they had not sense, so much as to cry out, "Lord, have mercy!" So they were sinking through the mighty waters, in the pit of destruction! And these instruments of divine mercy plucked them at once out of the water, and out of the fire! By the same act delivered them from temporal and from eternal death!

8. Nay, one poor sinner (let it never be forgotten!) was just coming down from the ship, when (overtaken by the justice and mercy of God) her foot slipped and she fell into the river. Instantly her senses were lost, so that she could not call upon God. Yet he had not forgotten her. He sent those, who delivered her from death; at least, from the death of the body. And who knows, but she may lay it to heart, and turn from the error of her ways? Who knows, but she may be saved from the second death, and with her deliverers *inherit the kingdom*?

9. One point more deserves to be particularly remarked. Many of those, who have been restored to life, (no less than eleven out of the fourteen, that were saved in a few months) were in the number of those, that are a reproach to our nation,

nation, wilful self-murderers. As many of the desperate men, who attempt this horrid crime, are men who have had a liberal education, 'tis pity but they would consider those fine words, not of a poor narrow-souled Christian, but of a generous Heathen, nay, a Roman! Let them calmly consider that beautiful passage:

*Proxima deinde tenent mœsti loca, qui sibi letum
Infantes perperêre manu, lucemque perosi
Projecêre animas. Quam vellent æthere in alto
Nunc & pauperiem, & duros perferre labores!
Fata obstant, tristisque palus innabilis undâ
Alligat, & novies Styx interfusa coerçet.**

Fata obstant! But in favour of many, we see God has over-ruled fate. They are brought back over the unnavigable river. They do behold the upper skies. They see the light of the sun. O let them see the light of thy countenance!

And

* Then crouds succeed, who, prodigal of breath,
Themselves anticipate the doom of death;
Though free from guilt, they cast their lives away,
And sad and sullen hate the golden day.
O with what joy the wretches now would bear
Pain, toil, and woe, to breathe the vital air!
In vain! By fate for ever are they bound
With dire Avernus, and the lake profound,
And Styx with nine wide channels roars around!

Mr. PITT's Virgil.

And let them so live their few remaining days on earth, that they may live with thee for ever!

IV. 1. Permit me now to make a short application. But to whom shall I direct this? Are there any here who are unhappily prejudiced against that revelation, which breathes nothing but benevolence? Which contains the richest display of God's love to man, that ever was made from the foundation of the world? Yet even to *you* I would address a few words; for if you are not Christians, you are men. You too are susceptible of kind impressions: you have the feelings of humanity. Has not your heart too glowed at that noble sentiment, (worthy the heart and the lips of the highest Christian)

Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto!

Have not you also sympathized with the afflicted? How many times have you been pained at human misery? When you have beheld a scene of deep distress, has not your soul melted within you?

“And now and then a sigh you stole,
And tears began to flow.”

But is it easy for any one to conceive a scene of deeper distress than this? Suppose you are stand-
ing

ing by, just when the messenger comes in, and the message is delivered. "I am sorry to tell you—but you must know it—Your husband is no more. He was making haste out of the vessel, and his foot slipped.—It is true, after a time his body was found. But there it lies, without any signs of life." In what a condition are now both the mother and the children? Perhaps for awhile stupid, overwhelmed, silent; staring at each other; then bursting out into loud and bitter lamentation! Now is the time to help them; by assisting those who make it their business so to do. Now let nothing hinder you from improving the glorious opportunity. - Restore the husband to his disconsolate wife, the father to his weeping children! It is true, you cannot do this in person: you cannot be upon the spot. But you may do it in an effectual manner, by assisting those that are. You may now by your generous contribution, *send* them the help which you cannot personally give. O shut not up your bowels of compassion towards them. Now open your hearts and your hands! If you have much, give plenteously! If not, give a little, with a willing mind!

2. To you who believe the Christian revelation, I may speak in a still stronger manner. You believe, your blessed Master *left* you an *example*, that you might tread in his steps. Now you know, his whole life was one labour of love.

You know, how *he went about doing good*, and that without intermission, declaring to all, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*. Is not that then the language of your heart,

“Thy mind throughout my life be shewn,
While list’ning to the wretches’ cry,
The widow’s and the orphan’s groan,
On mercy’s wings I swiftly fly,
The poor and helpless to relieve:
My life, my all, for them to give.”

Occasions of doing this can never be wanting; for *the poor ye have always with you*. But what a peculiar opportunity does the solemnity of this day furnish you with, of *treading in his steps*, after a manner which yon did not before conceive? Did he say to the poor, afflicted parent, (doubtless to the surprise of many) *weep not?* And did he surprise them still more, when he stopped her flowing tears, by restoring life to her dead son, and *delivering him to his mother?* Did he, (notwithstanding all that *laughed him to scorn*) restore to life the daughter of Jairus? How many things of a nearly resembling sort,

“If human we may liken to divine,”

have

have been done, and continue to be done daily, by these lovers of mankind? Let every one then be ambitious of having a share in this glorious work! Let every one (in a stronger sense than Mr. *Herbert* meant)

“Join hands with God, to make a poor man live.”

By your generous assistance, be ye partakers of their work, and partakers of their joy!

3. To you I need add but one word more. Remember (what was spoken at first) the solemn declaration of him, whose ye are, and whom ye serve, coming in the clouds of heaven! While you are promoting this comprehensive charity, which contains feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, lodging the stranger, indeed all good works in one, let those animating words be written on your hearts, and sounding in your ears, *In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.*

1847
The first of the year
was a very dry one
and the crops were
very poor.

The second of the year

was a very wet one
and the crops were
very good.

The third of the year

was a very dry one
and the crops were
very poor.

The fourth of the year

was a very wet one
and the crops were
very good.

The fifth of the year

was a very dry one
and the crops were
very poor.

The sixth of the year

was a very wet one
and the crops were
very good.

The seventh of the year

was a very dry one
and the crops were
very poor.

The eighth of the year

was a very wet one
and the crops were
very good.



On Pleasing all Men.

A

S E R M O N

On ROMANS. XV. 2.



K 3



ROMANS XV. 2.

Let every man please his Neighbour for his good to edification.

1. **U**NDoubtedly the duty here prescribed is incumbent on all mankind: at least on every one of those, to whom are intrusted the oracles of God. For it is here enjoined to every one without exception, that names the name of Christ. And the person whom every one is commanded to please is *his neighbour*, that is, every child of man. Only we are to remember here, what the same Apostle speaks upon a similar occasion. *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* In like manner we are to please all men, if it be possible as much as lieth in us: but strictly speaking, it is not possible; it is what no man ever did, nor ever will perform. But suppose we use our utmost diligence, be the event as it may, we fulfil our duty.

2. We

2. We may farther observe, in how admirable a manner the Apostle limits this direction; otherwise, were it pursued without any limitation, it might produce the most mischievous consequences. We are directed to please them *for their good*: not barely for the sake of pleasing them, or pleasing ourselves: much less of pleasing them to their hurt, which is so frequently done: indeed continually done, by those who do not love their neighbour as themselves. Nor is it only their temporal good, which we are to aim at in pleasing our neighbour; but what is of infinitely greater consequence; we are to do it *for their edification*. In such a manner as may conduce to their spiritual and eternal good. We are so to please them, that the pleasure may not perish in the using, but may redound to their lasting advantage: may make them wiser and better, holier and happier, both in time and in eternity.

3. Many are the treatises and discourses which have been published on this important subject. But all of them that I have either seen or heard were miserably defective. Hardly one of them proposed the right end: one and all had some lower design in pleasing men, than to save their souls, to build them up in love and holiness. Of consequence, they were not likely to propose the right means, for the attainment of that end. One celebrated

celebrated tract of this kind entitled *The Courtier*, was published in *Spain*, about two hundred years ago, and translated into various languages. But it has nothing to do with edification, and is therefore quite wide of the mark. Another treatise, entitled *The Compleat Courtier*, was published in our own country, in the reign of *King Charles the Second*, and (as it seems) by a retainer to his Court: in this there are several very sensible advices, concerning our outward behaviour: and many little improprieties in word or action are observed, whereby men displease others without intending it: but this Author likewise has no view at all to the spiritual or eternal good of his neighbour. Seventy or eighty years ago another book was printed in *London*, entitled *The Art of Pleasing*. But as it was wrote in a languid manner, and contained only common, trite observations, it was not likely to be of use to men of understanding, and still less to men of piety.

4. But it may be asked, Has not the subject been since treated of by a writer of a very different character? Is it not exhausted, by one who was himself a consummate Master of the Art of Pleasing? And who writing to one he tenderly loved, to a favourite son, gives him all the advices which his great understanding, improved by various learning, and the experience of many years, and much converse with all sorts of men, could

could suggest? I mean, the late Lord *Chesterfield*, the general darling of all the *Irish*, as well as the *English* nation.

5. The means of pleasing which this wise and indulgent parent continually and earnestly recommends to his darling child, and on which he doubtless formed both his tempers and outward conduct,

“Till death untimely stopp'd his tuneful tongue,”

were, first, *Making love* (in the grossest sense) to all the married women, whom he conveniently could. (Single women he advises him to refrain from, for fear of disagreeable consequences.) Secondly, Constant and careful *disimulation*, always wearing a mask: trusting no man upon earth, so as to let him know his real thoughts, but perpetually seeming to mean what he did not mean, and seeming to be what he was not. Thirdly, Well-devised *lying* to all sorts of people, speaking what was farthest from his heart: and in particular *flattering* men, women and children as the infallible way of pleasing them.

It needs no greater art to shew that this is not the way, to please our neighbour *for his good*, or to *edification*. I shall endeavour to shew, that there is a better way of doing it: and indeed
a way

a way diametrically opposite to this. It consists

I. In removing hinderances out of the way,
and

II. In using the means that directly tend to
this end.

I. 1. I advise all that desire to *please their neighbour for his good to edification*, first, To remove all hinderances out of the way ; or, in other words, to avoid every thing, which tends to displease wise and good men, men of sound understanding and real piety. Now *cruelty, malice, envy, hatred and revenge* are displeasing to all wise and good men, to all who are endued with sound understanding and genuine piety. There is likewise another temper, nearly related to these, only in a lower kind, and which is usually found in common life, wherewith men in general are not pleased. We commonly call it *ill-nature*. With all possible care avoid all these : nay, and whatever bears any resemblance to them : as sourness, sternness, fullness, on the one hand ; peevishness and fretfulness on the other : if ever you hope to *please your neighbour for his good to edification*.

2. Next

2. Next to cruelty, malice and similar tempers, with the words and actions that naturally spring therefrom, nothing is more disgusting, not only to persons of sense and religion, but even to the generality of men, than *pride, haughtiness* of spirit, and its genuine fruit, an *assuming arrogant overbearing* behaviour. Even uncommon learning, joined with shining talents, will not make amends for this: but a man of eminent endowments, if he be eminently haughty, will be despised by many, and disliked by all. Of this the famous Master of *Trinity College in Cambridge*, was a remarkable instance. How few persons of his time had a stronger understanding or deeper learning than *Dr. Bentley*? And yet how few were less beloved? Unless one who was little, if at all inferior to him in sense or learning, and equally distant from humility, the Author of the *Divine Legation of Moses*. Whoever therefore desires to please his neighbour for his good, must take care of splitting upon this rock. Otherwise the same pride which impels him to seek the esteem of his neighbour, will infallibly hinder his attaining it.

3. Almost as disgusting to the generality of men as *haughtiness* itself, is a *passionate* temper and behaviour. Men of a tender disposition are afraid even to converse with persons of this spirit. And others are not fond of their acquaintance, as frequently (perhaps when they expected nothing less)

less) meeting with shocks, which if they bear for the present, yet they do not willingly put themselves in the way of meeting with again. Hence passionate men have seldom many friends; at least, not for any length of time. Crowds indeed may attend them for a season, especially when it may promote their interest. But they are usually disgusted one after another, and fall off like leaves in Autumn. If therefore you desire lastingly to please your neighbour for his good, by all possible means avoid violent passion.

4. Yea, and if you desire to please, even on this account, take that advice of the Apostle, *Put away all lying*. It is the remark of an ingenious Author, that of all vices, *lying* never yet found an apologist, any that would openly plead in its favour, whatever his private sentiments might be. But it should be remembered, Mr. *Addison* went to a better world, before Lord *Chesterfield's* Letters were published. Perhaps his apology for it was the best that ever was, or can be made for so bad a cause. But after all, the labour he has bestowed upon it "has only semblance of worth; not substance." It has no solidity in it; it is nothing better than a shining phantom. And as lying can never be commendable or innocent, so neither can it be pleasing: at least when it is stript of its disguise, and appears in its own shape. Consequently it ought to be carefully

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avoided, by all those who wish to please their neighbour for his good to edification.

5. But is not *flattery*, a man may say, one species of lying? And has not this been allowed in all ages, to be the sure means of pleasing? Has not that observation been confirmed by numberless experiments.

"Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit?"

"Flattery creates friends, plain-dealing enemies."

Has not a late witty Writer, in his "Sentimental Journey," related some striking instances of this? I answer, It is true. Flattery is pleasing for awhile, and that not only to weak minds: as the desire of praise, whether deserved or undeserved, is planted in every child of man. But it is pleasing only for awhile. As soon as the mask drops off, as soon as it appears that the speaker meant nothing by his soft words, we are pleased no longer. Every man's own experience teaches him this. And we all know, that if a man continues to flatter, after his insincerity is discovered, it is disgustful, not agreeable. Therefore even this fashionable way of lying is to be avoided, by all that are desirous of pleasing their neighbour, to his lasting advantage.

6. Nay,

6. Nay, whoever desires to do this, must remember that not only *lying*, in every species of it, but even *diffimulation*, (which is not the same with lying, though nearly related to it) is displeasing to men of understanding, though they have not religion. *Terence* represents even an old Heathen, when it was imputed to him, as answering with indignation,

"Simulare non est meum."

"Diffimulation is no part of my character."

Guile, subtlety, cunning, the whole art of deceiving, by whatever terms it is expressed, is not accounted an accomplishment by wise men; but is indeed an abomination to them. And even those who practise it most, who are the greatest artificers of fraud, are not pleased with it in other men, neither are fond of conversing with those that practise it on themselves. Yea, the greatest deceivers are greatly displeased at those that play their own arts back upon them.

II. Now if cruelty, malice, envy, hatred, revenge, ill-nature; if pride and haughtiness; if irrational anger: if lying and diffimulation, together with guile, subtlety and cunning, are all and every one displeasing to all men, especially to wise and

good men, we may easily gather from hence, what is the sure way to please them, for their good to edification. Only we are to remember, that there are these in every time and place, whom we must not expect to please. We must not therefore be surpris'd, when we meet with men, who are not to be pleas'd any way. It is now as it was of old, when our Lord himself complain'd, *Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and saying to each other, We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced; we have mourn'd unto you, but ye have not wept.* But leaving these froward ones to themselves, we may reasonably hope to please others, by a careful and steady observation of the few directions following.

1. First, Let love not visit you as a transient guest, but be the constant, ruling temper of your soul. See that your heart be filled at all times and on all occasions, with real, undissembled benevolence, not to those only that love you, but to every soul of man. Let it pant in your heart, let it sparkle in your eyes, let it shine on all your actions. Whenever you open your lips, let it be with love, and let there be in your tongue the law of kindness. Your word will then distil as the rain, and as the dew upon the tender herb. Be not straiten'd or limited in your affection,
but

but let it embrace every child of man. Every one that is born of a woman has a claim to your good-will. You owe this not to some, but to all. And let all men know, that you desire both their temporal and eternal happiness as sincerely as you do your own.

2. Secondly, If you would please your neighbour for his good, study to be *lowly* in heart. Be little and vile in your own eyes, in honour preferring others before yourself. Be deeply sensible of your own weaknesses, follies and imperfections; as well as of the sin remaining in your heart, and cleaving to all your words and actions. And let this spirit appear in all you speak or do: *Be clothed with humility*. Reject with horror that favourite maxim of the old Heathen, sprung from the bottomless pit,

Tanti eris aliis, quanti tibi fueris :

“The more you value yourself, the more others will value you.” Not so: on the contrary, both God and man *resist the proud*: and as *God giveth grace to the humble*, so humility, not pride, recommends us to the esteem and favour of men, especially those that fear God.

3. If you desire to please your neighbour for his good to edification, you should thirdly, labour

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and

and pray, that you may be *meek*, as well as lowly in heart. Labour to be of a calm, dispassionate temper, *gentle* towards all men. And let the gentleness of your disposition appear in the whole tenor of your conversation. Let all your words and all your actions be regulated thereby. Remember likewise that advice of St. *Peter*. As an addition to your gentleness, *be merciful; be courteous; be pitiful*; be tenderly compassionate to all that are in distress, to all that are under any affliction, of mind, body, or estate. Let

“ The various scenes of human woe
Excite our softest sympathy; ”

Weep with them that weep. If you can do no more, at least mix your tears with theirs: and give them healing words, such as may calm their minds, and mitigate their sorrows. But if you can, if you are able to give them actual assistance, let it not be wanting. Be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame, a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless. This will greatly tend to conciliate the affection, and to give a profitable pleasure, not only to those who are immediate objects of your compassion; but to others likewise that *see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

4. And while you are *pitiful* to the afflicted, see that you are *courteous* toward all men. It matters not, in this respect, whether they are high or low, rich or poor, superior or inferior to you. No nor even whether good or bad, whether they fear God or not. Indeed the *mode* of shewing your courtesy may vary, as Christian prudence will direct. But the thing itself is due to all: the lowest and worst have a claim to our courtesy? It may either be inward or outward: either a temper, or a mode of behaviour. Such a mode of behaviour as naturally springs from courtesy of heart. Is this the same with good breeding or politeness? (Which seems to be only a high degree of good breeding) nay, good breeding is chiefly the fruit of education; but education cannot give courtesy of heart. Mr. *Addison's* well known definition of politeness seems rather to be a definition of this, "A constant desire of pleasing all men, appearing through the whole conversation." Now this may subsist, even in a high degree, where there has been no advantage of education. I have seen as real courtesy in an *Irish Cabin*, as could be found in *St. James'* or the *Louvre*.

5. Shall we endeavour to go a little deeper, to search the foundation of this matter? What is the source of that desire to please, which we term courtesy? Let us look attentively into our heart,
and

and we shall soon find an answer. The same Apostle that teaches us to *be courteous*, teaches us to *honour all men*. And his Master teaches me to love all men. Join these together, and what will be the effect? A poor wretch cries to me for an alms: I look and see him covered with dirt and rags. But through these I see one that has an immortal spirit, made to know and love and dwell with God to eternity: I honour him for his Creator's sake. I see through all these rags, that he is purpled over with the blood of Christ. I love him for the sake of his Redeemer. The courtesy therefore which I feel and shew toward him, is a mixture of the honour and love, which I bear to the offspring of God, the purchase of his Son's blood, and the candidate for immortality. This courtesy let us feel and shew toward all men; and we shall please all men to their edification.

6. Once more. Take all proper opportunities of *declaring* to others the *affection* which you really feel for them. This may be done with such an air, and in such a manner, as is not liable to the imputation of flattery. And experience shews, that honest men are pleased by this, full as much as knaves are by flattery. Those who are persuaded that your expressions of good-will toward them are the language of your heart, will be as well satisfied with them, as with the strongest encomiums, which you could pass upon them.

You

You may judge them by yourselves, by what you feel in your own breast. You like to be honoured : but had you not rather be beloved ?

7. Permit me to add one advice more. If you would please all men for their good, at all events *Speak* to all men the very *truth* from your heart. When you speak, open the window of your breast : let the words be the very picture of your heart. In all company and on all occasions, be a man of *veracity*, nay, be not content with bare veracity ; but in *simplicity and godly sincerity*, have *all your conversation in the world, as an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.*

8. To sum up all in one word, If you would please men, please God ! Let truth and love possess your whole soul. Let them be the springs of all your affections, passions, tempers ; the rule of all your thoughts. Let them inspire all your discourse ; continually seasoned with that salt, and *meet to minister grace to the hearers.* Let all your actions be wrought in love. Never let *mercy or truth forsake thee : bind them about thy neck.* Let them be open and conspicuous to all : and *write them on the table of thy heart.* So shalt thou find *favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.*

For my sake, then by your love, be not
in your own heart. You live as if
not but you are rather be a lover
of the world, to add one more man
would be to all men for their good, as all men
want to be loved, the very world from your
heart, for the world, from the window of your
heart, for the world is the very picture of your
heart. In all things, and on all occasions, be a
man of love, and be not content with your
virtue; but in kindness and good fellowship, let
all your conversation in the world, as an
angel, in which is no gain.
8. I am up all in one word, if you would
please me, please God, let truth and love
possess your whole soul. Let them be the spring
of all your affections, passions, thoughts, the rule
of all your thoughts. Let them inspire all your
discourse; continually attended with thankfulness and
joy to the Father, God, the Son, and the Spirit.
Let them be your strength and joy. Never let any of
your thoughts, words, or actions, be without them. Let
them be your light and comfort in all your
trials, and the strength of your faith. Let them be
your joy and glory in the thought of God.
Let them be your strength and joy in all your
trials, and the strength of your faith. Let them be
your joy and glory in the thought of God.



The Duty of Constant
Communion.

A

S E R M O N

ON LUKE xxii. 19.





S E R M O N

OF THE DUTY OF THE COMMON



To the READER.

The following Discourse was written above five and fifty years ago, for the use of my Pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I do now. But I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments, in any point which is therein delivered.

J. W.

LUKE xxii. 19.

Do this in remembrance of me.

IT is no wonder that men who have no fear of God, should never think of doing this. But it is strange that it should be neglected by any that do fear God, and desire to save their souls: and yet nothing is more common. One reason why many neglect it is, they are so much afraid of *eating and drinking unworthily*, that they never think how much greater the danger is, when

they do not eat or drink it at all. That I may do what I can to bring these well-meaning men to a more just way of thinking, I shall,

First, shew that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can; and Secondly, answer some objections.

I. I am to shew, that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can.

1. The first reason why it is the duty of every Christian so to do, is because it is a plain command of Christ. That this is his command, appears from the words of the text, *Do this in remembrance of me:* by which, as the Apostles were obliged to bless, break and give the bread to all that joined with them in these holy things, so were all Christians obliged to receive those signs of Christ's body and blood. Here therefore the bread and wine are commanded to be received, in remembrance of his death, to the end of the world. Observe too, that this command was given by our Lord, when he was just laying down his life for our sakes. They are therefore as it were, his dying words, to all his followers.

2. A second reason why every Christian should do this, as often as he can, is because the benefits of doing it are so great, to all that do it in obedience

obedience to him : namely, the forgiveness of our past sins, the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls. In this world we are never free from temptations. Whatever way of life we are in, whatever our condition be, whether we are sick or well, in trouble or at ease, the enemies of our souls are watching to lead us into sin. And too often they prevail over us. Now when we are convinced of having sinned against God, what surer way have we of procuring pardon from him, than the *shewing forth the Lord's death?* and beseeching him, for the sake of his Son's sufferings, to blot out all our sins?

3. The grace of God given herein, confirms to us the pardon of our sins and enables us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and blood of Christ. This is the food of our souls : this gives strength to perform our duty, and leads us on to perfection. If therefore we have any regard for the plain command of Christ, if we desire the pardon of our sins, if we wish for strength to believe, to love and obey God, then we should neglect no opportunity of receiving the Lord's Supper. Then we must never turn our backs on the feast which our Lord has prepared for us. We must neglect no occasion which the good providence of God affords us for this purpose. This is the true rule ; so often

are we to receive, as God gives us opportunity. Whoever therefore does not receive, but goes from the holy table, when all things are prepared, either does not understand his duty, or does not care for the dying command of his Saviour, the forgiveness of his sins, the strengthening of his soul, and the refreshing it with the hope of glory.

4. Let every one therefore who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can: like the first Christians with whom the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's-day's service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day. Four times a week always, and every saint's day beside. Accordingly those that joined in the prayers of the faithful, never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament. What opinion they had of any who turned his back upon it, we may learn from that ancient Canon, "If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the Church of God."

5. In order to understand the nature of the Lord's Supper, it would be useful carefully to read over those passages in the Gospel, and in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, which speak of the institution of it. Hence we learn that the
design

design of this sacrament is the continual remembrance of the death of Christ, by eating bread and drinking wine, which are the outward signs of the inward grace, the body and blood of Christ.

6. It is highly expedient for those who purpose to receive this, whenever their time will permit, to prepare themselves for this solemn ordinance, by self-examination and prayer. But this is not absolutely necessary. And when we have not time for it, we should see that we have the habitual preparation which is absolutely necessary, and can never be dispensed with on any account, or any occasion whatever. This is, first, a full *purpose* of heart, to keep all the commandments of God. And secondly, A sincere *desire*, to receive all his promises.

II. I am in the second place, to answer the common objections against constantly receiving the Lord's Supper.

1. I say, *Constantly* receiving. For as to the phrase of *frequent* communion it is absurd to the last degree. If it means any thing less than constant, it means more than can be proved to be the duty of any man. For if we are not obliged to communicate *constantly*, by what argument can it be proved, that we are obliged to communicate *frequently*? Yea, more than once a year, or once

in seven years? or once before we die? Every argument brought for this, either proves that we ought to do it *constantly*, or proves nothing at all. Therefore that indeterminate, unmeaning way of speaking, ought to be laid aside by all men of understanding.

2. In order to prove that it is our duty to communicate constantly, we may observe that the holy communion is to be considered either,
1. As a command of God, or 2. As a mercy to man.

First, As a command of God. God our mediator and governor, from whom we have received our life and all things, on whose will it depends, whether we shall be perfectly happy or perfectly miserable from this moment to eternity, declares to us, that all who obey his commands, shall be eternally happy; all who do not shall be eternally miserable. Now one of these commands is, "*Do this in remembrance of me.*" I ask then, Why do you not do this, when you can do it if you will? When you have an opportunity before you, why do not you obey the command of God?

3. Perhaps you will say, "God does not command me to do this *as often as I can*:" that is, the words "as often as you can," are not added in this particular place. What then? Are we not to obey every command of God, as often as

we

we can? Are not all the promises of God made to those, and those only, who *give all diligence*; that is, to those, who do all they can, to obey his commandments? Our power is the one rule of our duty. Whatever we can do, that we ought. With respect either to this or any other command, he that, when he may obey it if he will, does not, will have no place in the kingdom of heaven.

4. And this great truth, that we are obliged to keep every command as far as we can, is clearly proved from the absurdity of the contrary opinion: for were we to allow that we are not obliged to obey every commandment of God as often as we can, we have no argument left to prove that any man is bound to obey any command at any time. For instance. Should I ask a man, Why he does not obey one of the plainest commands of God? Why, for instance, he does not help his parents? He might answer, "I will not do it now; but I will at another time." When that time comes, put him in mind of God's command again: and he will say, "I will obey it some time or other." Nor is it possible ever to prove, that he ought to do it now, unless by proving that he ought to do it as often as he can: and therefore he ought to do it now, because he can if he will.

5. Consider

5. Consider the Lord's Supper, Secondly, as a mercy from God to man. As God, whose mercy is over all his works, and particularly over the children of men, knew there was but one way for man to be happy like himself, namely, by being like him in holiness: as he knew we could do nothing toward this of ourselves, he has given us certain means of obtaining his help. One of these is the Lord's Supper, which of his infinite mercy he hath given for this very end, that through this means we may be assisted to attain those blessings which he hath prepared for us; that we may obtain holiness on earth and everlasting glory in heaven.

I ask then, Why do you not accept of his mercy as often as ever you can? God now offers you his blessing: why do you refuse it? You have now an opportunity of receiving his mercy: why do you not receive it? You are weak: why do not you seize upon every opportunity of increasing your strength? In a word, considering this as a command of God, he that does not communicate as often as he can, has no piety: considering it as a mercy, he that does not communicate as often as he can, has no wisdom.

6. These two considerations will yield a full answer to all the common objections, which have been made against constant communion: indeed to all that ever were or can be made. In truth
nothing

nothing can be objected against it, but upon supposition, that this particular time, either the communion would be no mercy, or I am not commanded to receive it. Nay, should we grant it would be no mercy, that is not enough: for still the other reason would hold: whether it does you any good or none, you are to obey the command of God.

7. However let us see the particular excuses, which men commonly make for not obeying it. The most common is, "*I am unworthy; and he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.*" Therefore I dare not communicate, lest I should eat and drink my own damnation."

The case is this. God offers you one of the greatest mercies on this side heaven, and commands you to accept it. Why do not you accept this mercy, in obedience to his command? You say, "I am unworthy to receive it." And what then? You are unworthy to receive any mercy from God. But is that a reason for refusing all mercy? God offers you a pardon for all your sins. You are unworthy of it, it is sure, and he knows it: but since he is pleased to offer it nevertheless, will not you accept of it? He offers to deliver your soul from death. You are unworthy to live. But will you therefore refuse life? He offers to endue your soul with new strength:

strength: because you are unworthy of it, will you deny to take it? What can God himself do for us farther, if we refuse his mercy, because we are unworthy of it?

8. But suppose this were no mercy to us (to suppose which is indeed giving God the lie; saying, That is not good for man, which he purposely ordered for his good :) still I ask, Why do not you obey God's command? He says, "Do this." Why do you not? You answer, "I am unworthy to do it." What! Unworthy to obey God? Unworthy to do what God bids you do? Unworthy to obey God's command? What do you mean by this? That those who are unworthy to obey God, ought not to obey him? Who told you so? If he were even *an angel from heaven, let him be accursed.* If you think God himself has told you by *St. Paul*, let us hear his words. They are these, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.*

Why, this is quite another thing. Here is not a word said of *being unworthy* to eat and drink. Indeed he does speak of eating and drinking *unworthily*: but that is quite a different thing: so he has told us himself. In this very chapter we are told that by eating and drinking unworthily is meant, Taking the holy sacrament in such a rude and disorderly way, that one was *hungry,*

and

and another drunken. But what is that to you? Is there any danger of *your* doing so? Of your eating and drinking *thus unworthily*? However unworthy you are to communicate, there is no fear of your communicating thus. Therefore whatever the punishment is of doing it thus unworthily, it does not concern *you*. You have no more reason from this text to disobey God; than if there was no such text in the Bible. If you speak of "eating and drinking unworthily" in the sense St. Paul uses the words, You may as well say, "I dare not communicate *for fear the Church should fall*, as for fear I should eat and drink unworthily."

9. If then you fear bringing *damnation* on yourself by this, you fear where no fear is. Fear it not, for eating and drinking unworthily; for that in St. Paul's sense, ye cannot do. But I will tell you for what you shall fear damnation: for not eating and drinking at all: for not obeying your Maker and Redeemer: for disobeying his plain command: for thus setting at nought both his mercy and authority. Fear ye this: for hear what his Apostle saith, *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all*, James ii. 10.

10. We see then how weak the objection is, "I dare not receive,* because I am unworthy."

* The Lord's Supper.

Nor is it any stronger, though the reason why you think yourself unworthy is, that you have lately fallen into sin. It is true, our Church forbids those "who have done any grievous crime," to receive without repentance. But all that follows from this is, That we should repent before we come; not that we should neglect to come at all.

To say therefore, that "a man may turn his back upon the Altar, because he has lately fallen into sin: that he may impose this penance upon himself," is talking without any warrant from Scripture. For where does the Bible teach, to atone for breaking one commandment of God, by breaking another? What advice is this, "commit a new act of disobedience, and God will more easily forgive the past!"

11. Others there are, who to excuse their disobedience plead, that they are unworthy in another sense: that they "cannot live up to it; they cannot pretend to lead so holy a life, as constantly communicating would oblige them to do." Put this into plain words. I ask, Why do not you accept the mercy which God commands you to accept? You answer, "Because I cannot live up to the profession I must make when I receive it." Then it is plain you ought never to receive it at all. For it is no more lawful to promise once what you know you cannot perform, than to promise it a thousand times. You know too, that it is

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one and the same promise, whether you make it every year or every day. You promise to do just as much, whether you promise ever so often or ever so seldom.

If therefore you cannot live up to the profession they make who communicate once a week, neither can you come up to the profession you make, who communicate once a year. But cannot you indeed? Then it had been good for you that you had never been born. For all that you profess at the Lord's table, you must both profess and keep, or you cannot be saved. For you profess nothing there but this, That you will diligently keep his commandments. And cannot you keep up to this profession? Then you cannot enter into life.

12. Think then what you say, before you say, "You cannot live up to what is required of constant communicants." This is no more than is required of any communicants, yea, of every one that has a soul to be saved. So that to say "You cannot live up to this," is neither better nor worse than renouncing Christianity. It is in effect, renouncing your baptism, wherein you solemnly promised, to keep all his commandments. You now fly from that profession. You wilfully break one of his commandments, and to excuse yourself say you cannot keep his commandments! Then you cannot expect to receive

the promises, which are made only to those that keep them.

13. What has been said on this pretence against constant communion, is applicable to those who say the same thing in other words, "We dare not do it because it requires so perfect an obedience afterwards, as we cannot promise to perform." Nay it requires neither more nor less perfect obedience, than you promised in your baptism. You then undertook to keep the commandments of God by his help: and you promise no more when you communicate.

14. A second objection which is often made against constant communion, is the having so much business, as will not allow time for such a preparation as is necessary thereto. I answer, All the preparation that is absolutely necessary, is contained in those words, "Repent you truly of your sins past; have faith in Christ our Saviour." (And observe, that word is not taken in its highest sense!) "Amend your lives, and be in charity with all men: so shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries." All who are thus prepared, may draw near without fear, and receive the sacrament to their comfort. Now what business can hinder you from being thus prepared? From repenting of your past sins? From believing that Christ died to save sinners? From amending your lives, and being in charity with

with all men? No business can hinder you from this, unless it be such as hinders you from being in a state of salvation. If you resolve and design to follow Christ, you are fit to approach the Lord's table. If you do not design this, you are only fit for the table and company of devils.

15. No business therefore can hinder any man from having that preparation which alone is necessary, unless it be such as unprepares him for heaven, as puts him out of a state of salvation. Indeed every prudent man will, when he has time, examine himself, before he receives the Lord's Supper. Whether he repents him truly of his former sins, whether he believes the promises of God, whether he fully designs to walk in his ways, and be in charity with all men? In this, and in private prayer he will doubtless spend all the time he conveniently can. But what is this to *you* who have not time? What excuse is this, for not obeying God? He commands you to come, and prepare yourself by prayer, if you have time; if you have not, however come. Make not reverence to God's command, a pretence for breaking it. Do not rebel against him, for fear of offending him. Whatever you do, or leave undone besides, be sure to do what God bids you do. Examining yourself, and using private prayer, especially before the Lord's Supper, is good. But behold! *To obey is better than self-examination, and to hearken, than the prayer of an angel.*

16. A third objection against constant communion is, That it abates our reverence for the sacrament. Suppose it did? What then! Will you thence conclude, that you are not to receive it constantly? This does not follow. God commands you, "Do this." You may do it now, but will not: and to excuse yourself say, "If I do it so often, it will abate the reverence with which I do it now." Suppose it did: has God ever told you, That when the obeying his command abates your reverence to it, then you may disobey it? If he has, you are guiltless; if not, what you say is just nothing to the purpose. The law is clear. Either shew that the lawgiver makes this exception, or you are guilty before him.

17. Reverence for the sacrament may be of two sorts: either such as is owing purely to the newness of the thing, such as men naturally have for any thing they are not used to: or such as is owing to our faith, or to the love or fear of God. Now the former of these is not properly a religious reverence, but purely natural. And this sort of reverence for the Lord's-Supper, the constantly receiving of it must lessen. But it will not lessen the true religious reverence, but rather confirm and increase it.

18. A fourth objection is, "I have communicated constantly so long: but I have not found the benefit I expected." This has been the case with

with many well-meaning persons, and therefore deserves to be particularly considered. And consider this first. Whatever God commands us to do, we are to do, because he commands, whether we feel any benefit thereby or no. Now God commands, *Do this in remembrance of me.* This therefore we are to do, because he commands; whether we find present benefit thereby or not. But undoubtedly we shall find benefit sooner or latter, though perhaps insensibly. We shall be insensibly strengthened, made more fit for the service of God, and more constant in it. At least we are kept from falling back, and preserved from many sins and temptations: and surely this should be enough to make us receive this food as often as we can: though we do not presently feel the happy effects of it, as some have done, and we ourselves may, when God sees best.

19. But suppose a man has often been at the sacrament, and yet received no benefit. Was it not his own fault? Either he was not rightly prepared, willing to obey all the commands, and to receive all the promises of God: or he did not receive it aright, trusting in God. Only see that you are duly prepared for it, and the oftener you come to the Lord's table, the greater benefit you will find there.

20. A fifth objection which some have made against constant communion is, That "the Church enjoins it only three times a year." The words

of the Church are ; " Note that every Parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year." To this I answer, first, What if the Church had not enjoined it at all, is it not enough, that God enjoins it? We obey the Church only for God's sake. And shall we not obey God himself? If then, you receive three times a year, because the Church commands it, receive every time you can, because God commands it. Else your doing the one will be so far from excusing you for not doing the other, that your own practice will prove your folly and sin, and leave you without excuse.

But, Secondly, We cannot conclude from these words that the Church excuses him who receives only thrice a year. The plain sense of them is, That he who does not receive thrice at least, shall be cast out of the Church: but they by no means excuse him, who communicates no oftener. This never was the judgment of our Church: on the contrary, she takes all possible care, that the sacrament be duly administered, wherever the common-prayer is read, every Sunday and holiday in the year.

The Church gives a particular direction with regard to those that are in holy Orders, "In all Cathedral and Collegiate Churches and Colleges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall

shall all receive the communion with the Priest, every Sunday at the least."

21. It has been shewn, first, That if we consider the Lord's Supper as a command of Christ, no man can have any pretence to Christian piety, who does not receive it, (not once a month, but) as often as he can : Secondly, That if we consider the institution of it, as a mercy to ourselves, no man who does not receive it as often as he can, has any pretence to Christian prudence : Thirdly, that none of the objections usually made, can be any excuse for that man, who does not at every opportunity obey this command and accept this mercy.

22. It has been particularly shewn, first, That unworthiness is no excuse : because though in one sense we are all unworthy, yet none of us need be afraid of being unworthy in St. Paul's sense ; of *eating and drinking unworthily* : Secondly, That the not having time enough for preparation, can be no excuse : since the only preparation which is absolutely necessary, is that which no business can hinder ; nor indeed any thing on earth, unless so far as it hinders our being in a state of salvation : Thirdly, That its abating our reverence is no excuse : since he who gave the command, " Do this," no where adds, " Unless it abates your reverence ;" Fourthly, That our not
profiting

profiting by it is no excuse, since it is our own fault, in neglecting that necessary preparation, which is in our own power. Lastly, That the judgment of our own Church is quite in favour of constant communion. If those who have hitherto neglected it on any of these pretences, will lay these things to heart, they will by the grace of God, come to a better mind, and never more forsake their own mercies.



Of Former Times.

A

S E R M O N

On ECCLESIASTES vii. 10.







ECCLESIASTES vii. 10.

Say not thou, *What is the cause, that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.*

1. **I**T is not easy to discern any connection between this text and the context: between these words and either those that go before, or those that follow after. It seems to be a detached, independent sentence, like very many in the *Proverbs of Solomon*. And like them, it contains a weighty truth, which deserves a serious consideration. Is not the purport of the question this? It is not wise, to enquire into the cause of a supposition, unless the supposition itself be not only true, but clearly proved so to be. Therefore it is not wise to enquire into the cause of this supposition, That *the former days were better than these*: because, common as it is, it was never yet proved, nor indeed ever can be.

2. Perhaps

2. Perhaps there are few suppositions which have passed more currently in the world than this, That the former days were better than these; and that in several respects. It is generally supposed, that we now live in the dregs of time, when the world is as it were grown old, and consequently, that every thing in it is in a declining state. It is supposed, in particular, that men were some ages ago, of a far taller stature than now: that they likewise had far greater abilities, and enjoyed a deeper and stronger understanding: in consequence of which their writings of every kind are far preferable to those of later times. Above all, it is supposed, that the former generations of men excelled the present in virtue: that mankind in every age, and in every nation have degenerated more and more: so that at length they have fallen from the golden, into the iron age, and now justice is fled from the earth.

3. Before we consider the truth of these suppositions, let us enquire into the rise of them. And as to the general supposition, That the world was once in a far more excellent state than it is, may we not easily believe, that this arose (as did all the fabulous accounts of the golden age) from some confused traditions concerning our first parents and their paradisiacal state? To this refer many of the fragments of ancient writings, which men of learning have gleaned up. Therefore

fore me may allow, that there is some truth in the supposition: seeing it is certain, the days which *Adam* and *Eve* spent in *Paradise*, were far better than any, which have been spent by their descendants or ever will be, till *Christ* returns to reign upon earth.

4. But whence could that supposition arise, That men were formerly of a larger stature than they are now? This has been a generally prevailing opinion, almost in all nations and in all ages. Hence near two thousand years ago, the well-known line of *Virgil*,

Qualia nunc hominum producit corpora tellus.

Hence near a thousand years before him, *Homer* tells us of one of his Heroes throwing a stone, which hardly ten men could lift. *Θισὶ νῦν βεβρωτοί.* Such as men are now. We allow indeed there have been giants in all ages, in various parts of the world. Whether the Antediluvians mentioned in *Genesis* were such or no, (which many have questioned) we cannot doubt but *Og* the King of *Basan* was such, as well as *Goliath* of *Gath*. Such also were many of the children (or descendants) of *Anak*. But it does not appear, that in any age or nation men in general were larger than they are now. We are very sure, they were not for many centuries past, by the tombs and coffins

that have been discovered, which are exactly of the same size, with those that are now in use. And in the Catacombs at *Rome*, the niches for the dead bodies which were hewn in the rock sixteen hundred years ago, are none of them six feet in length, and some a little under. Above all, the Pyramids of *Egypt* (that of King *Cheops* in particular) have beyond all reasonable doubt remained, at least three thousand years. Yet none of the Mummies (embalmed bodies) brought therefrom, are above five feet ten inches long.

5. But how then came this supposition to prevail so long and so generally in the world? I know not but it may be recounted for from hence. Great and little are relative terms, and all men judge of greatness and littleness, by comparing things with themselves. Therefore it is not strange, if we think men are larger now, than they were when we were children. I remember a remarkable instance of this, in my own case. After having left it seven years, I had a great desire to see the school where I was brought up. When I was there, I wondered that the boys were so much smaller than they used to be when I was at school. "Many of my school-fellows ten years ago, were taller by the head than me. And few of them that are at school now, reach up to my shoulders." Very true; but what was the reason of this? Indeed a very plain one: it

was

was not because they were smaller, but because I was bigger than I was ten years before. I verily believe this is the cause, why men in general suppose the human race do decrease in stature. They remember the time when most of those round about them were both taller and bigger than themselves. Yea, and all men have done the same in their successive generations. Is it any wonder then, that all should have run into the same mistake? When it has been transmitted unawares from father to son, and probably will be, to the end of time.

6. But there is likewise a general supposition, that the understanding of man, and all his mental abilities, were of a larger size in the ancient days than they are now: and that the ancient inhabitants of the earth had far greater talents than the present. Men of eminent learning have been of this mind, and have contended for it with the utmost vehemence. It is granted, that many of the ancient Writers, both Philosophers, Poets and Historians, will not easily be excelled, if equalled, by those of later ages. We may instance in *Homer* and *Virgil*, as Poets, *Thucydides* and *Livy* as Historians. But, this mean time is to be remarked, concerning most of these Writers, that each of them spent his whole life in composing and polishing one book. What wonder then if they were exquisitely finished, when so much

labour was bestowed upon them? I doubt, whether any man in *Europe* or in the world, has taken so much pains in finishing any treatise. Otherwise it might possibly have equalled, if not excelled, any that went before.

7. But that the generality of men were not one jot wiser in ancient times, than they are at the present time, we may easily gather from the most authentic records. One of the most antient nations, concerning whom we have any certain account, is the *Egyptian*. And what conception can we have of their understanding and learning, when we reflect upon the objects of their worship? These were not only the vilest of animals, as dogs and cats, but the leeks and onions that grew in their own gardens. Indeed we lately had a great man, (whose manner was to treat with the foulest abuse, all that dared to differ from him: I do not mean Dr. *Johnson*: he was a mere Courtier, compared to Mr. *Hutchinson*) who scurrilously abused all those who are so void of common sense as to believe any such thing concerning them. He peremptorily affirms, (but without condescending to give us any proof,) That the ancient inhabitants of *Egypt* had a deep hidden meaning in all this. Let him believe it who can. I cannot believe it, on any man's bare assertion. I believe they had no deeper meaning in worshipping cats, than our school-boys have
in

in baiting them. And I apprehend, the common *Egyptians* were just as wise three thousand years ago, as the common ploughmen in *England* and *Wales* are at this day. I suppose their natural understanding, like their stature, was on a level with ours, and their learning, their acquired knowledge many degrees inferior, to that of persons of the same rank, either in *France*, *Holland* or *Germany*.

8. "However, did not the people of former times, greatly excel us in virtue? This is the point of greatest importance: the rest are but trifles in comparison of it. Now is it not universally allowed, that every age grows worse and worse? Was is not observed by the old Heathen Poet, almost two thousand years ago,

Ætas parentum, pejor avis tulit

Nos nequiores, jam daturus

Progeniem vitiosorem.

That is, in plain prose, "The age of our parents was more vicious than that of our grandfathers. Our age is more vicious than that of our fathers. We are worse than our fathers were, and our children will be worse than us."

9. It is certain, this has been the common cry, from generation to generation. And if it is not true, whence should it arise? How can we ac-

count for it? Perhaps another remark of the same Poet may help us to an answer. May it not be extracted from the general character which he gives of old men?

*Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
Se puero, censor, castigatoq: minorum.*

Is it not the common practice of the old men, to praise the past and condemn the present time? And this may probably operate much farther, than one would at first imagine. When those that have more experience than us, and therefore, we are apt to think more wisdom, are almost continually harping upon this, the degeneracy of the world; those who are accustomed from their infancy to hear, how much better the world was formerly than it is now, (and so it really seemed to them, when they were young, and just come into the world, and when the cheerfulness of youth gave a pleasing air, to all that was round about them) the idea of the world's being worse and worse, would naturally grow up with them. And so it will be, till we, in our turn, grew peevish, fretful, discontented, and full of melancholy complaints, "How wicked the world is grown!" How much better it was, when we were young, in the golden days that we can remember!

10. But

10. But let us endeavour, without prejudice or prepossession, to take a view of the whole affair. And upon cool and impartial consideration, it will appear that the former days were not better than these: yea, on the contrary, that these are in many respects, beyond comparison better than them. It will clearly appear, that as the stature of men was nearly the same from the beginning of the world, so the understanding of men, in similar circumstances, has been much the same, from the time of God's bringing a flood upon the earth, unto the present hour. We have no reason to believe that the uncivilized nations of *Africa*, *America*, or the *South-Sea Islands*, had ever a better understanding, or were in a less barbarous state than they are now. Neither on the other hand, have we any sufficient proof, that the natural understanding of men in the most civilized countries, *Babylon*, *Persia*, *Greece* or *Italy*, were stronger or more improved, than those of the *Germans*, *French* or *English* now alive. Nay, have we not reason to believe, that by means of better instruments we have attained that knowledge of nature, which few, if any of the Ancients ever attained. So that in this respect, the advantage, (and not a little one) is clearly on our side: and we ought to acknowledge with deep thankfulness to the Giver of every

every good gift, That the former days were not to be compared to these wherein we live.

11. But the principal enquiry still remains. Were not *the former days better than these*, with regard to virtue? or to speak more properly, religion? This deserves a full consideration.

By religion I mean, The love of God and man; filling the heart and governing the life. The sure effect of this is, the uniform practice of justice, mercy and truth. This is the very essence of it, the height and depth of religion, detached from this or that opinion, and from all particular modes of worship. And I would calmly enquire, Which of the former times were better than these, with regard to this? to the religion experienced and practised by Archbishop *Fenelon*, in *France*, Bishop *Kenn*, in *England*, and Bishop *Bedell*, in *Ireland*?

12. We need not extend our enquiry beyond the period when life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel. And it is allowed, that the days immediately succeeding the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; were better even in this respect, even with regard to religion, than any which have succeeded them.

But setting aside this short age of golden days, I must repeat the question, Which of the former
days.

days were better than the present, in every known part of the habitable world?

13. Was the former part of this century better either in these islands or any part of the Continent? I know no reason at all to affirm this. I believe every part of *Europe* was full as void of religion in the reign of *Queen Anne*, as it is at this day. It is true, luxury increases to a high degree, in every part of *Europe*. And so does the scandal of *England*, profaneness in every part of the kingdom. But it is also true, that the most infernal of all vices, cruelty, does as swiftly decrease. And such instances of it as in times past continually occurred, are now very seldom heard of. Even in war, that savage barbarity which was every where practised, has been discontinued for many years.

14. Was the last century more religious than this? In the former part of it there was much of the form of religion. And some undoubtedly experienced the power thereof. But how soon did the fine gold become dim! How soon was it so mingled with worldly design, and with a total contempt both of truth, justice and mercy, as brought that scandal upon all religion, which is hardly removed to this day. Was there more true religion in the preceding century, the age of the reformation? There was doubtless in many countries a considerable reformation of religious opinions:

opinions: yea, and modes of worship, which were much changed for the better, both in *Germany* and several other places. But it is well known, that *Luther* himself complained with his dying breath, "The people that are called by my name (though I wish they were called by the name of Christ) are reformed as to their opinions and modes of worship; but their tempers and lives are the same they were before." Even their both justice and mercy were so shamelessly trodden under foot, that an eminent writer computes the number of those that were slaughtered, during those religious contests, to have been no less than forty millions, within the compass of forty years!

15. We may step back above a thousand years from this, without finding any better time. No Historian gives us the least intimation of any such, till we come to the age of *Constantine* the Great. Of this period several writers have given us most magnificent accounts. Yea, one eminent Author, no less a man than *Dr. Newton*, the late Bishop of *Bristol*, has been at no small pains to shew that the conversion of *Constantine* to Christianity, and the emoluments which he bestowed upon the Church with an unsparing hand, were the event which is signified in the Revelation, by the *New Jerusalem* coming down from heaven!

16. But

16. But I cannot in anywise subscribe to the Bishop's opinion in this matter. So far from it, that I have been long convinced from the whole tenor of ancient History, that this very event, *Constantine's* calling himself a Christian, and pouring that flood of wealth and honour on the Christian Church, the Clergy in particular, was productive of more evil to the Church, than all the ten persecutions put together. From the time that power, riches and honour of all kinds, were heaped upon the Christians, vice of all kinds came in like a flood, both on the Clergy and Laity. From the time that the Church and State, the kingdoms of Christ and of the world, were so strangely and unnaturally blended together, Christianity and Heathenism were so thoroughly incorporated with each other, that they will hardly ever be divided, till Christ comes to reign upon earth. So that instead of fancying, that the glory of the New Jerusalem covered the earth at that period, we have terrible proof that it was then, and has ever since been covered with the smoke of the bottomless pit.

17. "However were not the days antecedent to this, those of the third century, better beyond all comparison, than any that followed them? This has been almost universally believed. Few doubt but in the age before *Constantine*, the Christian Church was in its glory, worshipping
God

God in the beauty of holiness. But was it so indeed? What says St. *Cyprian*, who lived in the midst of that century, a witness above all exception, and one that sealed the truth with his blood? What account does he give, of what he saw with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears? Such a one as would almost make one imagine he was painting to the life, not the ancient Church of *Carthage*, but the modern Church of *Rome*. According to his account, such abominations even then prevailed over all orders of men, that it was not strange God poured out his fury upon them in blood, by the grievous persecutions which followed.

18. Yea, and before this, even in the first century, even in the Apostolic age, what account does St. *John* give of several of the Churches, which he himself had planted in *Asia*? How little were those congregations better than many in *Europe*, at this day? Nay, forty or fifty years before that, within thirty years of the descent of the Holy Ghost, were there not such abominations in the Church of *Corinth*, as were not even named among the Heathens? So early did the mystery of iniquity begin to work in the Christian Church! So little reason have we to appeal to the former days, as though they were better than these?

19. To

19. To affirm this therefore, as commonly as it is done, is not only contrary to truth, but is an instance of black ingratitude to God, and a grievous affront to his blessed Spirit. For whoever makes a fair and candid enquiry, will easily perceive, that true religion has in nowise decreased, but greatly increased in the present century. To instance in one capital branch of religion, the love of our neighbour. Is not persecution well nigh vanished from the face of the earth? In what age did Christians of every denomination shew such forbearance to each other? When before was such lenity shewn by Governors toward their respective subjects? Not only in *Great Britain* and *Ireland*; but in *France* and *Germany*, yea, every part of *Europe*? Nothing like this has been seen since the time of *Constantine*; no, not since the time of the Apostles.

20. If it be said, "Why this is the fruit of the general infidelity, the Deism which has overspread all *Europe*:" I answer, whatever be the cause, we have reason greatly to rejoice in the effect. And if the all-wise God has brought so great and universal a good, out of this dreadful evil, so much the more should we magnify his astonishing power, wisdom, and goodness herein. Indeed so far as we can judge, this was the most direct way, whereby *nominal* Christians could be prepared, first for tolerating, and afterwards for

receiying *real* Christianity. While the Governors were themselves unacquainted with it, nothing but this could induce them to suffer it. O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Causing a total disregard for all religion, to pave the way for the revival of the only religion which was worthy of God! I am not assured whether this be the case or no, in *France* and *Germany*. But it is so, beyond all contradiction in *North-America*: the total indifference of the government there, whether there be any religion or none, leaves room for the propagation of true scriptural religion, without the least let or hinderance.

21. But above all this, while luxury and profaneness have been increasing on the one hand, on the other, benevolence and compassion toward all the forms of human woe, have increased in a manner not known before, from the earliest ages of the world. In proof of this, we see more Hospitals, Infirmaryes, and other places of public charity, have been erected, at least in and near *London*, within this century, than in five hundred years before. And suppose this has been owing in part to vanity, desire of praise, yet have we cause to bless God, that so much good has sprung even from this imperfect motive.

22. I cannot forbear mentioning one instance more, of the goodness of God to us in the present age.

age. He has lifted up his standard in our Islands, both against luxury, profaneness, and vice of every kind. He caused near fifty years ago, as it were a grain of mustard-seed to be sown near *London*, and it has now grown and put forth great branches, reaching from sea to sea. Two or three poor people met together, in order to help each other to be real Christians. They increased to hundreds, to thousands, to myriads, still pursuing their one point, real religion, the love of God and man, ruling all their tempers, and words and actions. Now I will be bold to say, such an event as this, considered in all its circumstances, has not been seen upon earth before, since the time that *St. John* went to *Abraham's* bosom.

23. Shall we now say, *The former days were better than these?* God forbid we should be so unwise and so unthankful. Nay, rather let us praise him all the day long; for he hath dealt bountifully with us. No *former time* since the Apostles left the earth, has been *better than the present*. None has been comparable to it in several respects. We are not born out of due time, but in the day of his power, a day of glorious salvation, wherein he is hastening to renew the whole race of mankind in righteousness and true holiness. How bright hath the Sun of Righteousness already shone on various parts of the earth! And how many gracious showers has he already poured

upon his inheritance? How many precious souls has he already gathered into his garner, as ripe flocks of corn! May we be always ready to follow them, crying in our hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!"

What



What is Man?

A

S E R M O N

On P S A L M. viii. 3, 4.





S. E. R. M. O. N.

PSALM viii. 3, 4.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man?

HOW often as it been observed, That the Book of Psalms, is a rich treasury of devotion, which the wisdom of God has provided to supply the wants of his children in all generations? In all ages the Psalms have been of singular use, to those that loved or feared God. Not only to the pious *Israelites*, but to the children of God in all nations. And this book has been of sovereign use to the Church of God, not only while it was in its state of infancy (so beautifully described by St. Paul, in the former part of the fourth chapter to the *Galatians*) but also since, in the fulness of time, *life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel*. The Christians in every age and nation, have availed themselves of this divine treasure, which has richly supplied

supplied the wants, not only of *babes in Christ*, of those who were just setting out in the ways of God, but of those also who had made good progress therein, yea of such as were swiftly advancing, toward *the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*.

The subject of this Psalm is beautifully proposed in the beginning of it, *O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens!* It celebrates the glorious wisdom and love of God, as the Creator and Governor of all things. It is not an improbable conjecture, that *David* wrote this Psalm in a bright star-light night, while he observed the moon also *walking in her brightness*: that while he surveyed

“This fair half-round, the ample azure sky,
Terribly large, and beautifully bright,
With stars unnumbered and unmeasured
light,”

he broke out, from the fulness of his heart, into that natural exultation, *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, What is man!* How is it possible that the Creator of these, the innumerable armies of heaven and earth, should have
any

any regard to this speck of creation, whose time
passeth away like a shadow!

“Thy frame but dust thy stature but a span,
 A moment thy duration, foolish man!”

What is man? I would consider this, first, with regard to his magnitude, and secondly, with regard to his duration.

I. 1. Consider we, first, What is man, with regard to his magnitude. And in this respect, what is any one individual, compared to all the inhabitants of *Great Britain*? He shrinks into nothing in the comparison. How inconceivably little is one compared to eight or ten millions of people? Is he not

“Lost like a drop in the unbounded main?”

2. But what are all the inhabitants of *Great Britain*, compared to all the inhabitants of the earth? These have frequently been supposed to amount to about four hundred millions. But will this computation be allowed to be just by those who maintain *China* alone to contain fifty-eight millions? If it be true, that this one empire contains little less than sixty millions, we may easily suppose, that the inhabitants of the whole

whole terraqueous globe amount to four thousand millions of inhabitants, rather than four hundred. And what is any single individual, in comparison of this number?

3. But what is the magnitude of the earth itself, compared to that of the Solar System. Including, beside that vast body the Sun, so immensely larger than the Earth, the whole train of primary and secondary Planets: several of which (I mean of the secondary Planets; suppose the Setelites or Moons of Jupiter and Saturn) abundantly larger than the whole Earth.

4. And yet what is the whole quantity of matter contained in the Sun and all those primary and secondary Planets with all the spaces comprized in the Solar System, in comparison of that which is pervaded by those amazing bodies, the Comets? Who but the Creator himself can tell *the number of these, and call them all by their names?* Yet what is even the orbit of a Comet, and the space contained therein, to the space which is occupied by the fixt Stars? which are at so immense a distance from the Earth, that they appear when they are viewed through the largest telescope, just as they do to the naked eye.

5. Whether the bounds of the Creation do or do not extend, beyond the region of the fixt stars, who can tell? *only the morning-stars, who sang together, when the foundations thereof were laid*

laid. But that it is finite, that the bounds of it are fixt, we have no reason to doubt. We cannot doubt, but when the Son of God had finished all the work which he created and made, he said

“These be thy bounds!

This be thy just circumference, O world!”

But what is man to this?

6. We may take one step, and only one step farther still. What is the space of the whole creation, what is all finite space, that is, or can be conceived, in comparison of infinite? What is it but a point, a cypher, compared to that, which is filled by him that is all in all! Think of this, and then ask, *What is man?*

7. What is man, that the great God, who filleth heaven and earth, *the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity*, should stoop so inconceivably low, as to *be mindful of him*? Would not reason suggest to us, that so diminutive a creature would be overlooked by him in the immensity of his works? Especially when we consider,

II. Secondly, What is man, with regard to his duration?

1. *The days of man*, since the last reduction of human life, which seems to have taken place in the time of *Moses*, (and not improbably was revealed

vealed to the man of God, at the time that he made this declaration) *are threescore years and ten.* This is the general standard which God hath now appointed. *And if men be so strong, perhaps one in a hundred, that they come to four-score years, yet then is their strength but labour and sorrow: so soon passeth it away, and we are gone!*

2. Now what a poor pittance of duration is this, compared to the life of *Methuselah*? *And Methuselah lived nine hundred, and sixty and nine years.* But what are these nine hundred, and sixty-nine years, to the duration of an angel? which began *or ever the mountains were brought forth*, or the foundations of the earth were laid. And what is the duration which has past, since the creation of angels, to that which past before they were created, to unbeginning eternity? To that half of eternity (if one may so speak) which had then elapsed! And what are threescore years and ten to this?

3. Indeed what proportion can there possibly be, between any finite and infinite duration? What proportion is there between a thousand, or ten thousand years, or ten thousand times ten thousand ages to eternity? I know not that the inexpressible disproportion between any conceivable part of time and eternity, can be illustrated in a more striking manner, than it is in the well-known

known passage of St. Cyprian. "Suppose there was a ball of sand as large as the globe of earth; and suppose one grain of this were to be annihilated in a thousand years; yet that whole space of time wherein this ball would be annihilating, at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, would bear less, yea unspeakably, infinitely less proportion to eternity, than a single grain of sand would bear, to that whole mass." What then are the seventy years of human life, in comparison of eternity? In what terms can the proportion between these be expressed? It is nothing, yea infinitely less than nothing!

4. If then we add to the littleness of man, the inexpressible shortness of his duration, is it any wonder that a man of reflection, should sometimes feel a kind of fear, lest the great, eternal, infinite Governor of the Universe, should disregard so diminutive a creature as man! A creature so every way inconsiderable, when compared either with immensity or eternity! Did not both these reflections glance through, if not dwell upon the mind of the royal Psalmist? Thus, in contemplation of the former, he breaks out into the strong words of the text, *When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, What is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou shouldst regard him?* He is indeed, (to

use St. *Augustine's* words (*Aliqua portio creaturæ tuæ*. Some portion of thy creation. But *quantula portio!* How amazingly small a portion! How utterly beneath thy notice! It seems to be in contemplation of the latter, that he cries out in the hundred and forty-fourth Psalm, *Lord, what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him; or the son of man, that thou shouldst so regard him? Man is like a thing of nought. Why? His time passeth away like a shadow.* In this (although in a very few places) the new translation of the Psalms, that bound up in our Bibles, is perhaps more proper than the old, that which we have in the Common Prayer Book. It runs thus, *Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man; that thou makest account of him?* According to the former translation, *David* seems to be amazed that the eternal God, considering the littleness of man, should have so much respect unto him, and should so much regard him! But in the latter, he seems to wonder, seeing the life of man *passeth away like a shadow*, that God should take any knowledge of him at all, or make any account of him!

5. And it is natural for us to make the same reflection, and to entertain the same fear. But how may we prevent this uneasy reflection, and effectually cure this fear? First, By considering what *David* does not appear to have taken at all
into

into his account, namely, That the body is not the man: that man is not only a house of clay, but an immortal spirit; a spirit made in the image of God, an incorruptible picture of the God of glory; a spirit that is of infinitely more value than the whole earth! Of more value than the sun, moon and stars put together; yea, than the whole material creation. Consider, that the spirit of man is not only of a higher order, of a more excellent nature than any part of the visible world, but also more durable, not liable either to dissolution or decay. We know all the things *which are seen are temporal*, of a changing, transient nature: but *the things which are not seen*, (such as is the soul of man in particular) *are eternal*. *They shall perish*, but the soul remaineth. *They all shall wax old as a garment*. But when heaven and earth shall pass away, the soul shall not pass away.

6. Consider, secondly, That declaration which the Father of Spirits hath made to us by the Prophet *Hosea, I am God and not man: therefore my compassions fail not*. As if he had said, If I were only a man, or an angel, or any finite being, my knowledge might admit of bounds, and my mercy might be limited. But *my thoughts are not as your thoughts, and my mercy is not as your mercy*. *As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, and*

my mercy, my compassion, my ways of shewing it, higher than your ways.

7. That no shadow of fear might remain, no possibility of doubting: to shew what manner of regard the great, eternal God bears to little, short-lived man, but especially to his immortal part. God gave his Son, *his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life.* See how God loved the world! The Son of God, that was God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God: in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal, *emptied himself, took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* And all this he suffered not for himself, but for us men and for our salvation. *He bore all our sins in his own body upon the tree, that by his stripes we might be healed.* After this demonstration of his love is it possible to doubt any longer, of God's tender regard for man, even though he was *dead in trespasses and sins?* Even when he saw us in our sins and in our blood, he said unto us, Live! Let us then fear no more! Let us doubt no more. He that *spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not with him freely give us all things?*

8. "Nay, says the Philosopher, if God so loved the world, did he not love a thousand other

other worlds, as well as he did this? It is now allowed, that there are thousands, if not millions of worlds, besides this in which we live. And can any reasonable man believe, that the Creator of all these, many of which are probably as large, yea, far larger than ours, would shew such astonishingly greater regard, to one than to all the rest?" I answer, Suppose there were millions of worlds, yet God may see in the abyss of his infinite wisdom, reasons that do not appear to us why he saw good to shew this mercy to ours, in preference to thousands or millions of other worlds.

9. I speak this even upon the common supposition of the plurality of worlds; a very favourite notion with all those who deny the Christian Revelation: and for this reason; because it affords them a foundation for so plausible an objection to it. But the more I consider that supposition, the more I doubt of it. Inasmuch that if it were allowed by all the Philosophers in *Europe*, still I could not allow it, without stronger proof than any I have met with yet.

10. "Nay, but is not the argument of the great *Huygens*, sufficient to put it beyond all doubt? When we view, says that able Astronomer, the Moon through a good telescope, we clearly discover

"Rivers and mountains on her spotted globe."

Now where rivers are there are doubtless plants and vegetables of various kinds. And where vegetables are, there are undoubtedly animals, yea, rational ones as on earth. It follows then that the Moon has its inhabitants, and probably near akin to ours. But if our Moon is inhabited, we may easily suppose, so are all the Secondary Planets; and in particular, all the Satelites or Moons of Jupiter and Saturn. And if the Secondary Planets are inhabited why not the Primary? Why should we doubt it of Jupiter and Saturn themselves, as well as Mars, Venus and Mercury."

11. But do not you know, that Mr. *Huygens* himself before he died, doubted of this whole hypothesis? For upon farther observation, he found reason to believe, that the Moon has no atmosphere. He observed, that in a total eclipse of the Sun, on the removal of the shade from any part of the earth, the Sun immediately shines bright upon it; whereas if the Moon had an atmosphere, the Solar light while it shone through that atmosphere, would appear dim and dusky. Thus after an eclipse of the Moon, first a dusky light appears, on that part of it, from which the shadow of the earth removes, while that light passes through the atmosphere of the earth.

earth. Hence it appears, that the Moon has no atmosphere. Consequently it has no clouds, no rain, no springs, no rivers; and therefore no plants or animals. But there is no proof or probability that the Moon is inhabited, neither have we any proof, that the other Planets are. Consequently, the foundation being removed, the whole fabric falls to the ground.

12. "But, you will say, suppose this argument fails we may infer the same conclusion. The plurality of worlds, from the unbounded wisdom, and power, and goodness of the Creator. It was full as easy to him, to create thousands or millions of worlds as one. Can any one then believe, that he would exert all his power, and wisdom, in creating a single world? What proportion is there between this speck of creation, and the great God that filleth Heaven and Earth! While

"We know the power of his Almighty hand
Could form another world from every sand!"

13. To this boasted proof, this Argumentum palmarium of the learned infidels, I answer, Do you expect to find any proportion between finite and infinite? Suppose God had created a thousand more worlds than there are grains of sand in the universe, what proportion would all these together

together bear, to the infinite Creator? Still, in comparison of him, they would be, not a thousand times, but infinitely less than a mite compared to the universe. Have done then with this childish prattle, about the proportion of creatures to their Creator: and leave it to the all-wise God, to create what and when he pleases! For *who* besides himself, *hath known the mind of the Lord?* Or *who hath been his counsellor?*

13. Suffice it then for us to know this plain and comfortable truth, That the Almighty Creator hath shewn that regard to this poor little creature of a day, which he hath not shewn even to the inhabitants of heaven, *who kept not their first estate.* He hath given us his Son, his only Son, both to live and to die for us! O let us live unto him, that we may die unto him, and live with him for ever!

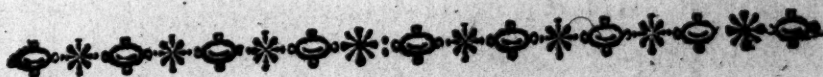


On Attending the Church
Service.

A

S E R M O N

On 1 SAMUEL ii. 17.



On the Church
Service





1 S A M U E L ii. 17.

The sin of the young men was very great.

1. **T**HE corruption not only of the Heathen world, but likewise of them that were called Christians has been matter of sorrow and lamentation to pious men, almost from the time of the Apostles. And hence as nearly as the second century, within a hundred years of St. *John's* removal from the earth men who were afraid of being partakers of other men's sins, thought it their duty to separate from them. Hence in every age many have retired from the world lest they should be stained with the pollutions of it. In the third century many carried this so far, as to run into deserts and turn Hermits. But in the following age this took another turn. Instead of turning Hermits, they turned Monks, Religious Houses now began to be built in every christian country. And Religious Communities were established, both of men and women,

men, who were entirely secluded from the rest of mankind, having no intercourse with their nearest relations, nor with any but such as were confined, generally for life, within the same walls.

2. This spirit of literally renouncing the world, by retiring into religious houses, did not so generally prevail after the reformation. Nay in Protestant countries, houses of this kind were totally suppressed. But still too many serious persons (chiefly incited thereto by those that are commonly called mystic writers) were eager to seclude themselves from the world, and run into solitude: supposing this to be the best, if not the only way, of escaping the pollution that is in the world.

3. One thing which powerfully inclined them to separate from the several Churches or religious Societies to which they had belonged, even from their infancy, was the belief that no good was to be expected from the ministration of unholy men. "What, said they, can we think that a holy God will bless the ministry of wicked men? Can we imagine that they who are themselves strangers to the grace of God will manifest that grace to others? Is it to be supposed that God ever did, or ever will work, by the children of the devil? And if this cannot be supposed, ought we not to *come out from among them and be separate?*"

4. For

4. For more than twenty years, this never entered into the thought of those that were called Methodists. But as more and more who had been brought up Dissenters joined with them, they brought in more and more prejudice against the Church. In process of time various circumstances concurred, to increase, and to confirm it. Many had forgotten, that we were all at our first setting out determined members of the Established Church. Yea, it was one of our original rules, that every member of our Society, should attend the Church and Sacrament, unless he had been bred among Christians of any other denomination.

5. In order therefore to prevent others from being puzzled and perplexed, as so many have been already, it is necessary in the highest degree, to consider this matter thoroughly: calmly to enquire, Whether God ever did bless the ministry of ungodly men? And whether he does so at this hour? Here is a plain matter of fact: if God never did bless it, we ought to separate from the Church; at least where we have reason to believe that the Minister is an unholy man. If he ever did bless it, and does so still, then we ought to continue therein.

6. Nineteen years ago we considered this question, in our public Conference at Leeds, "Whether the Methodists ought to separate from the

Church?" And after a long and candid enquiry, it was determined, *nemine contradicente*, That it was not expedient for them to separate. The reasons were set down at large: and they stand equally good at this day.

7. In order to put this matter beyond all possible dispute, I have chosen to speak from these words, which give a fair occasion of observing, what the dealings of God in his Church have been, even from so early a period: for it is generally allowed, that *Eli* lived at least a thousand years before our Lord came into the world. In the verses preceding the text we read, (v. 12, &c.) *Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.* They were wicked to an uncommon degree. Their profane violence, with respect to the sacrifices, is related with all its shocking circumstances, in the following verses. But (what was a greater abomination still) *They lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation!* v. 22. On both these accounts *the sin of the young men was very great, and men abhorred the offering of the Lord.*

8. May I be permitted to make a little digression, in order to correct a mistranslation in the twenty-fifth verse? In our translation it runs thus, *They hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.* Ought

it

it not rather to be rendered, Therefore *the Lord was about to slay them*. As if he had said, The Lord would not suffer their horrid and stubborn wickedness to escape unpunished; but because of that wickedness, he slew them both in one day, by the hand of the Philistines. They did not sin (as might be imagined from the common translation) because God had determined to slay them: but God therefore determined to slay them, because they had thus sinned.

9. But to return. Their sin was the more inexcusable, because they could not be ignorant of that dreadful consequence thereof, that by reason of their enormous wickedness, *men abhorred the offering of the Lord*. Many of the people were so deeply offended, that if they did not wholly refrain from the public worship, yet they attended it with pain, abhorring the priests, while they honoured the sacrifice.

10. And have we any proof, that the priests who succeeded them, were more holy than them, than *Hophni and Phinehas*, not only till God permitted ten of the tribes to be separated from their brethren, and from the worship he had appointed: but even till *Judah* as well as *Israel*, for the wickedness of the priests as well as the people were carried into captivity?

11. What manner of men they were about the time of the *Babylonish* captivity, we learn from,

various passages in the prophecy of *Jeremiah*. From which it manifestly appears, that people and priests wallowed in all manner of vices. And how little they were amended, after they were brought back into their own land, we may gather from those terrible words in the prophecy of *Malachi*. *And now, O ye Priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will send even a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yea I have cursed them already, because ye would not lay it to heart. Behold I will curse your seed, and I will spread dung upon their faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and men shall take you away with it, Mal. ii. 1, 2.*

12. Such were the priests of God in their several generations, till he brought the great High Priest into the world? And what manner of men were they during the time that he ministered upon earth? A large and particular account of their character we have in the twenty-third chapter of *St. Matthew*: and a worse character it would be difficult to find, in all the Oracles of God. But may it not be said, "Our Lord does not there direct his discourse to the Priests, but to the Scribes and Pharisees?" He does; but this is the same thing. For the Scribes were what we now term Divines, the public Teachers of

of the people. And many, if not most of the Priests, especially all the strictest sort of them were Pharisees: so that in giving the character of the Scribes and Pharisees, he gives that of the Priests also.

13. Soon after the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, in the infancy of the Christian Church, there was indeed a glorious change. *Great grace was then upon them all!* Ministers as well as people. *The multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul.* But how short a time did this continue? How soon did *the fine gold become dim?* Long before even the Apostolic Age expired, St. Paul himself had ground to complain, that some of his fellow-labourers had *forsaken him, having loved the present world.* And not long after, St. John reproved divers of the angels, that is, the Ministers of the Churches in *Asia*, because even in that early period, *their works were not found perfect before God.*

14. Thus did *the mystery of iniquity* begin to work, in the Ministers as well as the people, even before the end of the Apostolic Age. But how much more powerfully did it work, as soon as those master-builders, the Apostles were taken out of the way? Both Ministers and people were then farther and farther removed from the hope of the Gospel. Insomuch that when St. Cyprian, about

an hundred and fifty years after the death of St. *John*, describes the spirit and behaviour both of Laity and Clergy that were round about him, one would be ready to suppose he was giving us a description of the present Clergy and Laity of *Europe*. But the corruption which had been creeping in, drop by drop, during the second and third century, in the beginning of the fourth, when *Constantine* called himself a Christian, poured in upon the Church with a full tide. And whoever reads the history of the Church, from the time of *Constantine* to the Reformation, will easily observe that all the abominations of the Heathen world, and in following ages of the Mahometans, overflowed every part of it. And in every nation and city, the Clergy were not a whit more innocent than the Laity.

15. "But was there not a very considerable change in the body of the Clergy, as well as the Laity, at the time of the glorious Reformation from Popery?" Undoubtedly there was: and they were not only reformed from very many erroneous opinions, and from numberless superstitious and Idolatrous modes of worship, till then prevailing over the Western Church: but they were also exceedingly reformed, with respect to their lives and tempers. More of the ancient, scriptural Christianity was to be found, almost in every part of *Europe*. Yet notwithstanding this,

all

all the works of the devil, all ungodliness and unrighteousness, sin of every kind, continued to prevail, both over Clergy and Laity in all parts of Christendom. Even those Clergymen who most warmly contended about the externals of religion, were very little concerned for the life and power of it, for piety, justice, mercy and truth.

16. However, it must be allowed, that ever since the Reformation, and particularly in the present century, the behaviour of the Clergy in general is greatly altered for the better. And should it be granted, that in so many parts of the *Romish* Church, they are nearly the same as they were before, it must be granted likewise, that most of the *Protestant* Clergy, are far different from what they were. They have not only more learning of the most valuable kind, but abundantly much more religion. Insomuch that the *English* and *Irish* Clergy are generally allowed to be not inferior to any in *Europe*, for piety as well as for knowledge.

17. And all this being allowed what lack they yet? Can any thing be laid to their charge? I wish calmly and candidly to consider this point, in the fear and in the presence of God. I am far from desiring to aggravate the defects of my brethren, or to paint them in the strongest colours. Far be it from me, to treat others as I have been
treated

treated myself ; to return evil for evil, or railing for railing. But to speak the naked truth, not with anger or contempt, as too many have done ; I acknowledge, that many, if not most of those that were appointed to minister in holy things, with whom it has been my lot to converse, in almost every part of *England* or *Ireland*, for forty or fifty years last past, have not been eminent either for knowledge or piety. It has been loudly affirmed, That most of those persons now in connexion with *me*, who believe it their duty to call sinners to repentance, having been taken immediately from low trades, taylors, shoemakers and the like, are a set of poor, stupid, illiterate men, that scarce know their right hand from their left : yet I cannot but say, that I would sooner cut off my right hand, than suffer one of them to speak a word in any of our Chapels, if I had not reasonable proof, that he had more knowledge in the Holy Scriptures, more knowledge of himself, more knowledge of God and of the things of God ; than nine in ten of the Clergymen I have conversed with, either at the Universities, or elsewhere.

18. In the mean time I gladly allow that this charge does not concern the whole body of the Clergy : undoubtedly there are many Clergymen in these kingdoms, that are not only free from outward sin, but men of eminent learning, and
what

what is infinitely more, deeply acquainted with God. But still I am constrained to confess, that the far greater part of those Ministers I have conversed with for above half a century have not been holy men, not devoted to God, not deeply acquainted either with God or themselves. It could not be said, that they *set their affections on things above, not on things of the earth;* or that their desire, and the business of their lives was, To save their own souls and those that heard them.

19. I have taken this unpleasing view of a melancholy scene, of the character of those who have been appointed of God to be shepherds of souls for so many ages, in order to determine this question, Ought the children of God to refrain from his ordinances, because they that administer them are unholy men? A question with which many serious persons have been exceedingly perplexed. "Ought we not, say they, to refrain from the ministrations of ungodly men? For is it possible that we should receive any good from the hands of those that know not God? Can we suppose that the grace of God was ever conveyed to men by the servants of the devil?"

What saith the Scripture? Let us keep close to this, and we shall not be misled. We have seen there, what manner of men, most of these have been who have ministered in holy things
for

for many ages. Two or three thousand years ago, we read, *The sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.* But was this a sufficient reason for the Israelites to refrain from their administrations? It is true, they *abhorred the offerings of the Lord* on their account. And yet they constantly attended them. And do you suppose that *Samuel*, holy as he was, ever advised them to do otherwise? Were not the Priests and and public Teachers equally strangers to God, from this time to that of the *Babylonish* captivity? Undoubtedly they were. But did *Isaiah* or any of the Prophets exhort them for that cause to forsake the ordinances of God? Were they not equally ungodly from the time of the *Babylonish* captivity, to the coming of Christ? How clearly does this appear, were there no other proof, from the Prophecies of *Jeremiah* and *Malachi*? Yet did either *Malachi* or *Jeremiah*, or any other of the Prophets exhort the people to separate themselves from these ungodly men?

20. But to bring the matter nearer to ourselves. Never were any Priests or public Teachers more corrupt, more totally estranged from God, than those in the days of our blessed Lord. Were they not mere whited walls? Were not those that were the best of them painted sepulchres? Full of pride, lust, envy, covetousness? Of all ungodliness and unrighteousness? Is not this the
account

account which our Lord himself, who knew what was in man, gives of them? But did he therefore refrain from that public service, which was performed by these very men? Or did he direct his Apostles so to do? Nay, just the contrary: in consequence of which, as he constantly attended them himself, so likewise did his disciples.

21. There is another circumstance in our Lord's conduct, which is worthy of our peculiar consideration. *He calls to him the twelve, and sends them forth, two by two, to preach the gospel, (Mark vi.)* And as they do not go the warfare at their own cost, the very devils *were subject unto them.* Now one of these was *Judas Iscariot.* And did our Lord know that *he had a devil?* St. *John* expressly tells us he did. Yet he was coupled with another of the Apostles, and joined with them all in the same communion. Neither have we any reason to doubt but God blessed the labour of all his twelve ambassadors. But why did our Lord send him among them? Undoubtedly for our instruction. For a standing unanswerable proof, that he *sends by whom he will send*: that he can and doth send salvation to men even by those, who will not accept of it themselves.

22. Our Lord gives us farther instruction upon this head, in the xxviiiith chapter of Matthew (ver. 1, 2, 3.) we have those very remarkable words, *Then*

Jesus

Jefus spoke to the multitude and his disciples saying, The Scribes and Pharisees fit in Moses' chair: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do. But do not according to their works; for they say and do not. Of these very men he gives the blackest character in the following verses. Yet is he so far from forbidding either the multitude or his own disciples to attend their ministrations, that he expressly commands them so to do, even in those words, All things whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do. These words imply a command to hear them: for how could they observe and do what they bid them, if they did not hear it? I pray consider this, ye that say of the successors of these ungodly men, They say and do not: therefore we ought not to hear them. You see, your Master draws no such inference; nay the direct contrary. O be not wiser than your Master: follow his advice and do not reason against it.

23. But how shall we reconcile this with the direction given by St. Paul to the Corinthians? *If any that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, with such an one, no not to eat,* 1 Cor. v. 11. How is it reconcileable with that direction in his second epistle, (chap. vi. 11,) *Come out from the midst of them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.* I answer, the former pas-

sage has no relation at all to the present question. It does not concern Ministers good or bad. The plain meaning of it is, Have no intimacy with any that is called a Christian, and lives in any open sin: a weighty exhortation, which should be much attended to by all the children of God. As little does the other passage refer to Ministers or Teachers of any kind. In this the Apostle is exhorting the children of God, to break off all intercourse with the children of the devil. The words literally are, *Go out from the midst of them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing.* Intimating, that they could not continue united with them, without being more or less partakers of their sins. We may therefore boldly affirm, that neither St. Paul nor any other of the inspired Writers, even advised holy men to separate from the Church wherein they were, because the Ministers were unholy.

24. Nevertheless it is true, that many pious Christians as was observed before, did separate themselves from the Church, some even in the second, and many more in the third century. Some of these retired into the desert, and lived altogether alone: others built themselves houses, afterwards termed *Convents*, and only secluded themselves from the rest of the world. But what was the fruit of this separation? The same that might easily be foreseen. It increased and be-

flowed in an astonishing degree, the total corruption of the Church. The salt which was thus heaped up in a corner had effectually lost its flavour. The light which was put under a bushel, no longer shone before men. In consequence of this, ungodliness and unrighteousness reigned without control. The world being given up into the hands of the devil, wrought all his works with greediness. And gross darkness joined with all manner of wickedness, covered the whole earth.

25. "But if all this wickedness, was not a sufficient reason for separating from a corrupt Church, why did *Calvin* and *Luther* with their followers separate from the Church of *Rome*? I answer, They did not properly separate from it, but were violently thrust out of it. They were not suffered to continue therein, upon any other terms than subscribing to all the errors of that Church, and joining in all their superstition and idolatry. Therefore this separation lay at *their* door. With us it was not a matter of choice, but of necessity. And if such necessity was now laid upon us we ought to separate from any Church under heaven.

26. There were not the same reasons why various bodies of men should afterwards separate from the Church of *England*. No sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them; neither

are

are at this day. Most of them separated, either because of some *opinions*, or some *modes of worship*, which they did not approve of. Few of them assigned the unholiness either of the Clergy or Laity, as the cause of their separation. And if any did so, it did not appear that they themselves were a jot better, than those they separated from.

27. But the grand reason, which many give for separating from the Church, namely that the Ministers are unholy men, is founded on this assertion, That the ministration of evil men can do no good; that we may call the sacraments *means of grace*: but men who do not receive the grace of God themselves, cannot convey that grace to others. So that we can never expect to receive the blessing of God through the servants of the devil.

This argument is extremely plausible, and is indeed the strongest that can be urged. Yet before you allow it to be conclusive, you should consider a few things.

28. Consider, first, Did the Jewish sacraments convey no saving grace to the hearers, because they were administered by unholy men? If so, none of the Israelites were saved, from the time of *Eli*, to the coming of Christ. For their Priests were not a whit better than ours; if they were not much worse. But who will dare to affirm

this? Which is no less in effect, than to affirm, That all the children of Israel went to hell for eleven or twelve hundred years together.

29. Did the ordinances administered in the time of our blessed Lord convey no grace to those that attended them? Surely then the Holy Ghost would not have commended *Zacharias and Elizabeth for walking in these ordinances!* If the ministrations of wicked men did no good, would our Lord have commanded his followers (so far from forbidding them) to attend those of the Scribes and Pharisees? Observe again the remarkable words (Matt. xxiii. 1, &c.) *Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, are your appointed teachers, all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.*—Now what were these Scribes and Pharisees? Were they not the vilest of men? Yet these very men he commands them to hear. This command is plainly implied in those words, *Whatsoever they command you to observe, that observe and do.* For unless they heard what they said, they could not do it.

30. Consider a little farther, the dreadful consequences of affirming, that wicked Ministers do no good. That the ordinances administered by them do not convey saving grace to those that attend them. If it be so, then well nigh all the
Christians

Christians from the time of the Apostles, to that of the Reformation are perished? For what manner of men were well nigh all the Clergy, during all those centuries? Consult the History of the Church in every age, and you will find more and more proofs of their corruption. It is true, they have not been so openly abandoned since; but ever since that happy period there has been a considerable change for the better, in the Clergy as well as the Laity. But still there is reason to fear that even those who now minister in holy things, who are outwardly devoted to God for that purpose, (yea, and in Protestant, as well as Romish countries) are nevertheless far more devoted to the world, to riches, honour, or pleasure (a few comparatively excepted) than they are to God: so that in truth they are as far from Christian holiness as earth is from heaven. If then no grace is conveyed by the ministry of wicked men; in what a case is the Christian world? How hath God forgotten to be gracious? How hath he forsaken his own inheritance? O think not so! Rather say with our own Church (though in direct opposition to the Church of Rome, which maintains, "If the Priest does not minister with a *pure intention*, which no wicked man can do, then the sacrament is no sacrament at all.") The unworthiness of the Minister doth not hinder the efficacy of God's ordinance. The reason

is plain; because the efficacy is derived, not from him that administers, but from him that ordains it. He does not, will not, suffer his grace to be intercepted, though the messenger will not receive it himself.

31. Another consequence would follow from the supposition, That no grace is conveyed by wicked Ministers, namely, That a conscientious person cannot be a member of any National Church in the world. For wherever he is, it is great odds, whether a holy Minister be stationed there: and if there be not, it is mere lost labour, to worship in that congregation. But, blessed be God, this is not the case: we know by our own happy experience, and by the experience of thousands that the word of the Lord is not bound though uttered by an unholy Minister: and the sacraments are not dry breasts whether he that administers, be holy or unholy.

32. Consider one more consequence of this supposition, should it ever be generally received, Were all men to separate from those Churches where the minister was an unholy man: (as they ought to do, if the grace of God never did, nor could attend his ministry) what confusion, what tumults, what commotions would this occasion throughout Christendom? What evil-furmings, heart-burnings, jealousies, envyings, must every where arise? What censuring, tale-bearing, strife, contention?

contention? Neither would it stop here: but from evil words the contending parties would soon proceed to evil deeds: and rivers of blood would soon be shed, to the utter scandal of Mahometans and Heathens.

33. Let us not then trouble and embroil ourselves and our neighbours with unprofitable disputations, but all agree to spread, to the uttermost of our power, the quiet and peaceable gospel of Christ. Let us make the best of whatever ministry the providence of God has assigned us. Near fifty years ago, a great and good man, Dr. *Potter*, then Archbishop of *Canterbury*, gave me an advice, for which I have ever since had occasion to bless God. "If you desire to be extensively useful, do not spend your time and strength, in contending for or against such things as are of a disputable nature; but in testifying against open, notorious vice, and in promoting real, essential holiness." Let us keep to this; leaving a thousand disputable points to those that have no better business, than to toss the ball of controversy to and fro, let us keep close to our point. Let us bear a faithful testimony in our several stations, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness; and with all our might recommend that inward and outward holiness *without which no man shall see the Lord.*



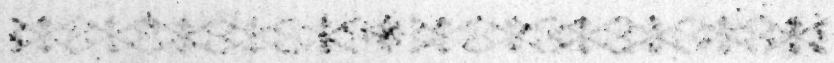
On Conscience.

A

S E R M O N

On 2 C O R. i. 12.





On Confidence.

A



On a Cor. i. 111



2 COR. i. 12.

*For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our
Conscience,*

1. **H**OW few words are there in the world more common than this, *Conscience*? It is almost in every one's mouth. And one would thence be apt to conclude, that no word can be found, which is more generally understood. But it may be doubted whether this is the case or no, although numberless treatises have been written upon it. For it is certain, a great part of those writers have rather puzzled the cause than cleared it, that they have usually *darkened counsel, by uttering words without knowledge.*

2. The best treatise on the subject which I remember to have seen, is translated from the French of Monsr. *Placatt*, which describes in a clear and rational manner the nature and offices of *Conscience*. But though it was published
near

near a hundred years ago, it is in very few hands. And indeed a great part of those that have read it, complain of the length of it. An octavo volume of several hundred pages, upon so plain a subject, was likely to prove a trial of patience to most persons of understanding. It seems therefore there is still wanting a discourse upon the subject, short as well as clear. This by the assistance of God I will endeavour to supply, by shewing, first, the Nature of Conscience; and then the several sorts of it; after which I shall conclude with a few important directions.

I. 1. And first, I am to shew the Nature of Conscience. This a very pious man in the last century (in his Sermon on Universal Conscientiousness) describes in the following manner, "This word, which, literally signifies *Knowing with another*, excellently sets forth the Scriptural notion of it. So *Job* xvi. 19. *My witness is in heaven*: and so the Apostle, *Rom.* ix. 1. *I say the truth, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost*. In both places it is as if he had said, God witnesseth with my Conscience. Conscience is placed in the middle, under God, and above man. It is a kind of silent reasoning of the mind whereby those things which are judged to be right are approved of with pleasure; but those which are judged evil are disapproved of with uneasiness."

uneasiness." This is a tribunal in the breast of men to accuse sinners and excuse them that do well.

2. To view it in a somewhat different light, Conscience, as well as the Latin word, from which it is taken, and the Greek word *συνητρις*, necessarily imply *the knowledge of two or more things together*. Suppose the knowledge of our words and actions, and at the same time of their goodness or badness: if it be not rather the faculty whereby we know at once our actions and the quality of them.

3. *Conscience* then is that faculty, whereby we are at once conscious of our own thoughts, words and actions, and of their merit or demerit, of their being good or bad, and consequently deserving either praise or censure. And some pleasure generally attends the former sentence, some uneasiness the latter. But this varies exceedingly, according to education, and a thousand other circumstances.

4. Can it be denied, that something of this is found in every man born into the world? And does it not appear, as soon as the understanding opens? as soon as reason begins to dawn? Does not every one then begin to know that there is a difference between good and evil? how imperfect soever, the various circumstances of this sense of good and evil may be? Does not every man,

for instance, know, unless blinded by the prejudices of education (like the inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope) that it is good to honour his parents? Do not all men, however uneducated, or barbarous, allow, It is right to do to others as we would have them do to us? And are not all who know this, condemned in their own mind, when they do any thing contrary thereto? as, on the other hand, when they act suitable thereto, they have the approbation of their own Conscience.

5. This faculty seems to be what is usually meant by those who speak of *Natural Conscience*: an expression frequently found in some of our best Authors, but yet not strictly just. For though in one sense it may be termed *Natural*, because it is found in all men, yet properly speaking, it is not *Natural*; but a supernatural gift of God, above all his natural endowments. No, it is not nature but the Son of God, that is *the true light, which enlighteneth every man which cometh into the world*. So that we may say to every human creature, *He, not nature, hath shewn thee, O man what is good*. And it is his spirit who giveth thee an inward check, who causeth thee to feel uneasy, when thou walkest in any instance contrary to the light which he hath given thee.

6. It may give a peculiar force to that beautiful passage, to consider by whom, and on what occasion

occasion the words were uttered. The persons speaking are *Balak* the king of *Moab*, and *Balaam*, then under divine impressions: (it seems, then *not far from the kingdom of God*, although afterward he so foully revolted.) Probably *Balak* too at that time experienced something of the same influence. This occasioned his *consulting with*, or asking counsel of *Balaam*, his proposing the question to which *Balaam* gives so full an answer, (*Micah vi. ver. 5, &c.*) *O my people (saith the Prophet in the name of God) remember what Balak the King of Moab consulted (it seems in the fulness of his heart.) And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him. Wherewith, said he, shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression? The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (This the Kings of Moab had actually done, on occasions of deep distress: a remarkable account of which is recorded in the third chapter of the second book of Kings.) To this Balaam makes that noble reply (being doubtless then taught of God) He hath shewed thee O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God!*

7. To take a more distinct view of Conscience, it appears to have a threefold office: First, it is a *witness*, testifying what we have done, in thought, or word or action: Secondly, It is a *Judge* passing sentence on what we have done, that it is good or evil. And, Thirdly, It in some sort *executes* the sentence by occasioning a degree of complacency in him that does well, and a degree of uneasiness, in him that does evil.

8. Professor *Hutchinson* late of *Glasgow*, places Conscience in a different light. In his Essay on the Passions, he observes, That we have several *senses*, or natural avenues of pleasure and pain, besides the five external senses. One of these he terms, "*The Public Sense*", whereby we are naturally pained at the misery of a fellow-creature, and pleased at his deliverance from it. And every man, says he, has a *moral sense*, whereby he approves of benevolence and disapproves of cruelty. Yea, he is uneasy, when he himself has done a cruel action, and pleased when he has done a generous one.

9. All this is in some sense undoubtedly true. But it is not true, that either the *public* or the *moral sense*, (both of which are included in the term Conscience,) is now *natural* to man. Whatever may have been the case at first, while man was in a state of innocence, both the one and the other is now a branch of that supernatural

ral gift of God, which we usually stile *preventing grace*. But the Professor does not at all agree with this. He sets God wholly out of the question. God has nothing to do with his scheme of virtue, from the beginning to the end. So that to say the truth, his scheme of virtue is Atheism all over. This is refinement indeed! Many have excluded God out of the world: he excludes him even out of religion!

10. But do we not mistake him? Do we take his meaning right? That it may be plain enough, that no man may mistake him, he proposes this question, "What if a man in doing a virtuous, that is, a generous action, in helping a fellow-creature, has an eye to God, either as commanding, or as promising to reward it? Then, says he, so far as he has an eye to God, the virtue of the action is lost. Whatever actions spring from an eye to the recompence of reward, have no virtue, no moral goodness in them." Alas! Was this man called a Christian? How unjustly was he slandered with that assertion? Even Dr. Taylor, though he does not allow Christ to be God yet does not scruple to term him "A person of consummate virtue." But the Professor cannot allow him any virtue at all!

11. But to return. What is Conscience in the Christian sense? It is that faculty of the soul, which, by the assistance of the grace of God, sees

at one and the same time, 1. Our own tempers and lives, the real nature and quality of our thoughts, words and actions. 2. The rule whereby we are to be directed, and 3. The agreement or disagreement therewith. To express this a little more largely, Conscience implies, First, The faculty a man has of knowing himself, of discerning both in general and in particular, his own tempers, thoughts, words and actions. But this it is not possible for him to do, without the assistance of the Spirit of God. Otherwise self-love, and indeed every other irregular passion would disguise, and wholly conceal him from himself. It implies, Secondly, a knowledge of the rule, whereby he is to be directed in every particular, which is no other than the written word of God. Conscience implies, Thirdly, a knowledge that all his thoughts, and words and actions are conformable to that rule. In all the offices of Conscience, the *unction of the Holy One* is indispensably needful. Without this neither could we clearly discern our lives or tempers; nor could we judge of the rule whereby we are to walk, or of our conformity or disconformity to it.

12. This is properly the account of a *good* Conscience, which may be in other terms expressed thus, a divine Consciousness of walking in all things according to the written word of God. It seems indeed, that there can be no Conscience, which has not a regard to God. If you say,

"Yes:

"Yes: there certainly may be a consciousness of having done right or wrong, without any reference to him." I answer. This I cannot grant. I doubt whether the very words, *right* and *wrong*, according to the Christian system, do not imply in the very idea of them, agreement and disagreement to the will and word of God. If so, there is no such thing as Conscience in a Christian, if we leave God out of the question.

13. In order to the very existence of a good Conscience, as well as to the continuance of it, the continued influence of the Spirit of God, is absolutely needful. Accordingly the Apostle *John* declares to the believers of all ages, *Ye have an unction from the Holy One; and ye know all things*: all things that are needful to your having a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man. So he adds, *Ye have no need that any one should teach you, otherwise than as that anointing teacheth you*. That anointing clearly teacheth us those three things, First, the true meaning of God's word. Secondly, our own tempers and lives, bringing all our thoughts, words and actions to remembrance; and Thirdly the agreement of all, with the commandments of God.

14. Proceed we now to consider in the second place, the several *sorts* of Conscience. A good Conscience has been spoken of already. This
St.

St. Paul expresses various ways. In one place he simply terms it, a *good Conscience toward God*: in another, a *Conscience void of offence toward God and toward man*. But he speaks still more largely in the text: *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity, with a single eye, and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.* Meantime he observes that this was done, *not by fleshly wisdom*: commonly called prudence; (this never did, nor ever can produce such an effect: *but by the grace of God*, which alone is sufficient to work this in any child of man.

15. Nearly allied to this, (if it be not the same placed in another view, or a particular branch of it) is a *tender Conscience*. One of a tender Conscience is exact in observing any deviation from the word of God, whether in thought, or word, or work, and immediately feels remorse and self-condemnation for it. And the constant cry of his soul is,

“O that my tender soul may fly

The first abhorred approach of ill:

Quick as the apple of an eye

The slightest touch of sin to feel.”

16. But sometimes this excellent quality, *tenderness of Conscience*, is carried to an extreme.

We

We find some who fear where no fear is, who are continually condemning themselves without cause; imagining some things to be sinful, which the Scripture no where condemns; and supposing other things to be their duty, which the Scripture no where enjoins. This is properly termed, a *scrupulous* Conscience, and is a sore evil. It is high'y expedient to yield to it as little as possible; rather it is a matter of earnest prayer, that you may be delivered from this sore evil, and may recover a sound mind: to which nothing would contribute more, than the converse of a pious and judicious friend.

17. But the extreme which is opposite to this, is far more dangerous. A *hardened* Conscience is a thousand times more dangerous than a scrupulous one: that can violate a plain command of God, without any self-condemnation; either doing what he has expressly forbidden, or neglecting what he has expressly commanded: and yet without any remorse: yea perhaps glorying in this very hardness of heart! Many instances of this deplorable stupidity we meet with at this day: and even among people that suppose themselves to have no small share of religion. A person is doing something which the Scripture clearly forbids. You ask, How do you dare to do this? and are answered with perfect unconcern, "O my heart does not condemn me." I reply, "So much

much the worse. I would to God it did. You would then be in a safer state than you are now. It is a dreadful thing, to be condemned by the word of God, and yet not to be condemned by your own heart!" If we can break the least of the known commands of God, without any self-condemnation, it is plain that the god of this world hath hardened our hearts. If we do not soon recover from this, we shall be *past feeling*, and our Consciences (as St. Paul speaks) will be *seared as with a hot iron*.

18. I have now only to add a few important directions. The first great point is this: suppose we have a tender Conscience, how shall we preserve it. I believe there is only one possible way of doing this, which is, To obey it. Every act of disobedience, tends to blind and deaden it, to put out its eyes, that it may not see the good and the acceptable will of God, and to deaden the heart, that it may not feel self-condemnation, when we act in opposition to it. And on the contrary, every act of obedience gives to the Conscience a sharper and stronger sight, and a quicker feeling of whatever offends the glorious Majesty of God. Therefore, if you desire to have your Conscience always quick to discern, and faithful to accuse or excuse you; if you would preserve it always sensible and tender, be sure to obey it at all events. Continually listen

to its admonitions, and steadily follow them. Whatever it directs you to do according to the word of God, do; however grievous to flesh and blood. Whatever it forbids, if the prohibition be not grounded on the word of God, see you do it not, however pleasing it may be to flesh and blood. The one or the other may frequently be the case. What God forbids may be pleasing to our evil nature. There you are called to deny yourself, or you deny your Master. What he enjoins, may be painful to nature: there take up your cross. So true is our Lord's word, *Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple.*

19. I cannot conclude this discourse better than with an extract from Dr. *Annesley's* Sermon on Universal Conscientiousness.*

"Be persuaded to practice the following directions, and your Conscience will continue right.

1. Take heed of every sin: count no sin small: and obey every command with your might. Watch against the first risings of sin, and beware of the borders of sin. Shun the very appearance of evil. Venture not upon temptations or occasions of sin.

2. Consider yourself as living under God's eye: live as in the sensible presence of the jealous God.

* Dr. *Annesley* [my mother's father] was Rector of the Parish of *Cripplegate*.

Remember,

Remember, all things are naked and open before him! You cannot deceive him; for he is infinite wisdom: you cannot fly from him; for he is every where: you cannot bribe him; for he is righteousness itself! Speak as knowing God hears you: walk, as knowing God besets you on every side. The Lord is with you, while you are with him: that is, you shall enjoy his favourable presence, while you live in his awful presence.

3. Be serious and frequent in the examination of your heart and life. There are some duties like those parts of the body, the want of which, may be supplied by other parts: but the want of these nothing can supply. Every evening review your carriage through the day; what you have done, or thought, that was unbecoming your character: whether your heart has been instant upon religion, and indifferent to the world? Have a special care of two portions of your time, namely morning and evening: the morning to forethink what you have to do, and the evening to examine, Whether you have done what you ought?

4. Let every action have reference to your whole life, and not to a part only. Let all your subordinate ends be suitable to the great end of your living. *Exercise yourself unto godliness.* Be as diligent in religion, as thou wouldst have thy children that go to school be in learning. Let thy whole life be a preparation for heaven, like the preparation of wrestlers for the combat.

5. Do

5. Do not venture on sin, because Christ hath purchased a pardon; that is a most horrible abuse of Christ. For this very reason there was no sacrifice under the law for any wilful sin; lest people should think, they knew the price of sins, as those do who deal in Popish indulgences.

6. Be nothing in your own eyes; for what is it, alas, that we have to be proud of! Our very conception was sinful, our birth painful, our life toilsome, our death we know not what! But all this is nothing to the state of our soul. If we know this, what excuse have we for pride?

7. Consult duty; not events. We have nothing to do but to mind our duty. All speculations that tend not to holiness, are among your superfluities: but forebodings of what may befall you in doing your duty, may be reckoned among your sins: and to venture upon sin to avoid danger, is to sink the ship for fear of pirates. O how quiet, as well as holy would our lives be, had we learned that single lesson, To be careful for nothing but to do our duty, and leave all consequences to God! What madness for silly dust to prescribe to Infinite Wisdom? To let go our work and meddle with God's? He hath managed the concerns of the world, and of every individual person in it, without giving cause of complaint to any, for above these five thousand

years. And does he now need *your* counsel? Nay, it is *your* business to mind your own duty.

8. What advice you would give another, take yourself: the worst of men are apt enough to lay burdens on others, which if they would take on themselves, they would be rare Christians.

9. Do nothing on which you cannot pray for a blessing. Every action of a Christian that is good, is sanctified by the word and prayer. It becomes not a Christian to do any thing so trivial, that he cannot pray over it. And if he would but bestow a serious ejaculation on every occurrent action, such a prayer would cut off all things sinful and encourage all things lawful.

10. Think, and speak, and do what you are persuaded Christ himself would do in your case, were he on earth. It becomes a Christian, rather to be an example, than to follow one. But by imitating Christ you become an example to all, who was, and is, and ever will be, our absolute pattern. O Christians, how did Christ pray, and redeem time for prayer! How did Christ preach, out of whose mouth proceeded no other but gracious words? What time did Christ spend in impertinent discourse? How did Christ go up and down doing good to men, and what was pleasing to God? Beloved, I commend to you these four memorials. 1. Mind duty: 2. What is the duty of another in your case is your own: 3. Do

g. Do not meddle with any thing, if you cannot say, The blessing of the Lord be upon it. 4.
 Above all, sooner forget your Christian name, than forget to eye Christ! Whatever treatment you meet with from the world, remember him and follow his steps: *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth! Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*"

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been
 named in the above report, in the order in which they were
 named:



On Faith.

A

S E R M O N

On H E B R E W S xi. 6.



U 3





H E B R E W S xii 6.

Without faith it is impossible to please him.

1. **B**UT what is *faith*? It is a divine *evidence*, and *conviction of things not seen*: of things which are not seen now, whether they are visible or invisible in their own nature. Particularly it is a divine evidence and conviction of God and of the things of God. This is the most comprehensive definition of faith that ever was or can be given, as including every species of faith, from the lowest to the highest. And yet I do not remember any eminent writer, that has given a full and clear account of the several sorts of it, among all the verbose and tedious treatises, which have been published upon the subject.

2. Something indeed of a similar kind has been written by that great and good man, Mr. *Fletcher*, in his treatise on the various *Dispensations* of the grace of God. Herein he observes, that there are four dispensations, that are distinguished from each

each other, by the degree of light which God vouchsafes to them that are under each. A small degree of light is given, to those that are under the *Heathen* dispensation. These generally believed, *that there was a God, and that he was a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* But a far more considerable degree of light was vouchsafed to the *Jewish* nation: inasmuch as to them were entrusted the grand means of light, the oracles of God. Hence many of these had clear and exalted views of the nature and attributes of God: of their duty to God and man: yea, and of the great promise, made to our first parents and transmitted by them to their posterity, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.*

3. But above both the *Heathen* and *Jewish* dispensation, was that of *John the Baptist*. To him a still clearer light was given: and he was himself *a burning and a shining light.* To him it was given, to *behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.* Accordingly our Lord himself affirms, that *of all which had been born of women, there had not till that time arisen a greater than John the Baptist!* But nevertheless he informs us, *He that is least in the kingdom of God, the Christian dispensation, is greater than he.* By one that is under the *Christian* dispensation, Mr. *Fletcher* means, one that has received the Spirit of adoption, that has the

Spirit

Spirit of God witnessing *with his spirit, that he is a child of God.*

In order to explain this still farther, I will endeavour, by the help of God,

First, To point out the several sorts of faith, and secondly, To draw some practical inferences.

I. In the first place, I will endeavour to point out the several sorts of faith. It would be easy, either to reduce these to a smaller number, or to divide them into a greater. But it does not appear that this would answer any valuable purpose.

1. The lowest sort of faith, if it be any faith at all, is that of a *Materialist*: a man who (like the late Lord *Kaim*) believes there is nothing but matter in the universe. I say, if it be any faith at all: for properly speaking, it is not. It is not *an evidence or conviction of God*, for they do not believe there is any: neither is it a conviction of things not seen; for they deny the existence of such. Or if, for decency sake, they allow there is a God, yet they suppose even him to be material. For one of their maxims is,

"Jupiter est quodcunq; vides."

"Whatever you see is God."

Whatever

Whatever you see! A visible, tangible god! Excellent divinity! Exquisite nonsense!

2. The second sort of faith, if you allow a Materialist to have any, is the faith of a *Deist*. I mean, one who believes there is a God, distinct from matter; but does not believe the Bible. Of these we may observe two sorts: one sort, are mere beasts in human shape, wholly under the power of the basest passions, and having

"A downright appetite to mix with mud."

Other Deists are, in most respects rational creatures, though unhappily prejudiced against Christianity. Most of these believe the being and attributes of God, they believe, that God made and governs the world: and that the soul does not die with the body, but will remain for ever in a state of happiness or misery.

3. The next sort of faith is the faith of *Heathens*, with which I join that of *Mahometans*. I cannot but prefer this before the faith of the Deists; because though it embraces nearly the same objects, yet they are rather to be pitied than blamed, for the narrowness of their faith. And their not believing the whole truth, is not owing to want of sincerity, but merely to want of light. When one asked *Chicali*, an old Indian Chief, "Why do not you *red* men know as much as us
white

white men?" He readily answered, "Because you have *the great word*, and we have not?"

4. It cannot be doubted but this plea will avail, for millions of modern *Heathens*. Inasmuch as to them little is given, of them little will be required. As to the ancient *Heathens*, millions of them likewise were savages. No more therefore will be expected of them, than the living up to the light they had. But many of them, especially in the civilized nations, we have great reason to hope, although they lived among *Heathens*, yet were quite of another spirit: being taught of God, by his inward voice, all the essentials of true religion. Yea, and so was that *Mahometan*, an *Arabian*, who a century or two ago, wrote the life of *Hai Ebn Yokton*. The story seems to be feigned; but it contains all the principles of pure religion and undefiled.

5. But in general, we may surely place the faith of a *Jew*, above that of a *Heathen* or *Mahometan*. By *Jewish* faith I mean the faith of those who lived between the giving of the law and the coming of Christ. These, that is, those that were serious and sincere among them, believed all that is written in the Old Testament. In particular, they believed, that in the fulness of time, *the Messiah* would appear, to *finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness*.

6. It

6. It is not so easy to pass any judgment concerning the faith of our modern *Jews*. It is plain, *the veil is still upon their hearts, when Moses and the Prophets are read.* The god of this world still hardens their hearts, and still blinds their eyes; *lest at any time the light of the glorious gospel should break in upon them.* So that we may say of this people, as the Holy Ghost said to their forefathers, *The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them,* Acts xxviii. 27. Yet it is not our part to pass sentence upon them, but to leave them to their own master.

6. I need not dwell upon the faith of *John the Baptist*, any more than the dispensation which he was under: because these, as Mr. *Fletcher* well describes them, were peculiar to himself. Setting him aside, the faith of the *Roman Catholics* in general, seems to be above that of the ancient *Jews*. If most of these are volunteers in faith, believing more than God has revealed, it cannot be denied, that they believe all which God has revealed, as necessary to salvation. In this we rejoice on their behalf: we are glad that none of those new articles, which they added at the Council of *Trent*, to the faith once delivered to the saints, does so materially

materially contradict any of the ancient articles, as to render them of no effect.

7. The faith of the *Protestants*, in general, embraces only those truths as necessary to salvation, which are clearly revealed in the Oracles of God. Whatever is plainly declared in the Old and New Testament, is the object of their faith. They believe neither more nor less, than what is manifestly contained in, and proveable by the Holy Scriptures. The word of God is *a lantern to their feet, and a light in all their paths*. They dare not on any pretence go from it, to the right-hand or to the left. The written word is the whole and sole rule of their faith, as well as practice. They believe whatsoever God has declared, and profess to do whatsoever he hath commanded. This is the proper faith of *Protestants*: by this they will abide and no other.

8. Hitherto faith has been considered chiefly as an evidence and conviction of such or such truths. And this is the sense wherein it is taken at this day in every part of the Christian world. But in the mean time let it be carefully observed (for eternity depends upon it) that neither the faith of a Roman Catholic, nor that of a Protestant, if it contains no more than this, no more than the embracing such and such truths, will avail any more before God, than the faith of a *Mahometan* or a *Heathen*, yea of a *Deist* or *Materialist*. For

can this faith save him? Can it save any man, either from sin or from hell? No more than it could save Judas Iscariot; no more than it could save the devil and his angels: all of whom are convinced, that every tittle of Holy Scripture is true.

9. But what is the faith which is properly saving? Which brings eternal salvation to all those that keep it to the end? It is such a divine conviction of God, and the things of God, as even in its infant state, enables every one that possesses it to *fear God and work righteousness*. And whosoever in every nation believes thus far, the Apostle declares is *accepted of him*. He actually is, at that very moment, in a state of acceptance. But he is at present only a *servant* of God, not properly a *son*. Meantime let it be well observed, that *the wrath of God no longer abideth on him*.

10. Indeed nearly fifty years ago, when the Preachers commonly called Methodists, began to preach that grand scriptural doctrine, Salvation by Faith, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand, that even one *who feared God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him*. In consequence of this, they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently

quently asked those who feared God, "Do you know that your sins are forgiven?" And upon their answering, "No," immediately replied, "Then you are a child of the devil." No; that does not follow. It might have been said, (and it is all that can be said with propriety) "Hitherto you are only a *servant*: you are not a *child* of God. You have already great reason to praise God that he has called you to his honourable service. Fear not. Continue crying unto him: *and you shall see greater things than these.*"

11. And indeed, unless the servants of God halt by the way, they will receive the adoption of sons. They will receive the *faith* of the children of God by his *revealing* his only begotten Son in their hearts. Thus, the faith of a child is properly and directly, a divine conviction, whereby every child of God is enabled to testify, *The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* And whosoever hath this, *the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God.* So the Apostle writes to the *Galatians*, *Ye are the sons of God by faith.* And because ye are sons, *God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, saying, Abba, Father:* that is, giving you childlike confidence in him, together with a kind affection toward him. This then it is, that (if St. Paul was taught of God, and wrote as he was moved

by the Holy Ghost,) properly constitutes the difference between a servant of God and a child of God. *He that believeth as a child of God, hath the witness in himself.* This the servant hath not. Yet let no man discourage him: rather lovingly exhort him to expect it every moment!

12. It is easy to observe, that all the sorts of faith which we can conceive, are reducible to one or other of the preceding. But let us covet the best gifts, and follow the most excellent way. There is no reason why you should be satisfied with the faith of a Materialist, a Heathen, or a Deist: nor indeed with that of a servant: I do not know that God requires it at your hands; indeed if you have received this, you ought not to cast it away. You ought not in any wise to undervalue it, but to be truly thankful for it. Yet in the mean time, beware how you rest here: press on till you receive the Spirit of Adoption. Rest not, till that spirit clearly witnesses with your spirit, that you are a child of God.

II. I proceed in the second place, to draw a few inferences from the preceding observations.

1. And I would first infer, in how dreadful a state, if there be a God, is a Materialist! One who denies not only the *Lord that bought him*, but also the *Lord that made him*! *Without faith it is impossible to please God:* but it is impossible

he

He should have any faith at all; any conviction of any invisible world; for he believes there is no such thing: any conviction of the being of a God; for a *material* God is no god at all. For you cannot possibly suppose the Sun or Skies to be God, any more than you can suppose a god of wood or stone. And farther, whosoever believes all things to be mere matter, must of course believe, that all things are governed by dire necessity? Necessity, that is as inexorable as the winds, as ruthless as the rocks, as merciless as the waves that dash upon them, or the poor shipwrecked mariners! Who then shall help thee, thou poor desolate wretch, when thou art most in need of help? Winds, and seas, and rocks, and storms! Such are the best helpers, which the Materialists can hope for!

2. Almost equally desperate is the case of the poor *Deist*, how learned, yea how moral so ever he be. For you likewise, though you may not advert to it, are really *without God in the world*. See your religion, "the religion of nature delineated by the ingenious Mr. *Wollaston*: (whom I remember to have seen when I was at school, attending the public service at the *Charterhouse Chapel*.) Does he found his religion upon God? Nothing less. He founds it upon truth. Abstract truth. But does he not by that expression mean God? No; he sets him out of the ques-

tion; and builds a beautiful castle in the air, without being beholden either to him or his word. See your smooth-tongued Orator of *Glasgow*, one of the most pleasing Writers of the age. Has he any more to do with God on his system than Mr. *Wollaston*? Does he deduce his "Idea of Virtue," from him? As the Father of Lights, the Source of all Good? Just the contrary. He not only plans his whole Theory without taking the least notice of God, but toward the close of it proposes that question, "Does the having an eye to God in an action, enhance the virtue of it?" He answers, No: it is so far from this, that if in doing a virtuous, that is a benevolent action, a man mingles a desire to please God, the more there is of this desire, the less virtue there is in that action. Never before did I meet with either Jew, Turk, or Heathen, who so flatly renounced God as this Christian Professor!

3. But with Heathens, Mahometans and Jews, we have at present nothing to do: only we may wish that their lives did not shame many of us that are called Christians. We have not much more to do, with the members of the Church of *Rome*. But we cannot doubt that many of them, like the excellent Archbishop of *Cambray*, still retain (notwithstanding many mistakes,) that faith that worketh by love. And how many of the
Protestants

Protestants enjoy this, whether members of the Church, or of other Congregations? We have reason to believe a considerable number, both of one and the other, (and blessed be God an increasing number) in every part of the land.

4. Once more. I exhort you that fear God and work righteousness, you that are servants of God, first, flee from all sin, as from the face of a serpent, being

“ Quick as the apple of an eye,
The slightest touch of sin to feel :”

and to work righteousness, to the utmost of the power you now have : to abound in works both of piety and mercy : and, secondly, continually to cry to God, that he would reveal his Son in your hearts, to the intent you may be no more servants, but sons : having his love shed abroad in your hearts, and walking in *the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

5. I exhort you, lastly, who already feel the Spirit of God witnessing with your spirit, that you are the children of God, follow the advice of the Apostle, *Walk in all the good works whereunto ye are created in Christ Jesus.* And then leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, go on to perfection.



On God's Vineyard.

A

S E R M O N

On ISAIAH V. 4.





On God's Vineyard.



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ISAIAH V. 4.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

THE vineyard of the Lord, taking the word in its widest sense, may include the whole world. All the inhabitants of the earth, may in some sense be called the vineyard of the Lord, who hath made all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, that they might seek the Lord, if haply they may feel after him, and find him. But in a narrower sense the vineyard of the Lord may mean, the Christian World: that is, all that name the name of Christ, and profess to obey his word. In a still narrower sense, it may be understood of what is termed, The Reformed part of the Christian Church. In the narrowest of all one may, by that phrase, The vineyard of the Lord, mean, the body of people commonly called Methodists.

thodists. In this sense I understand it now, meaning thereby that Society only, which began at *Oxford*, in the year 1729, and remain united at this day. Understanding the word in this sense, I repeat the question which God proposes to the Prophet, *What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*

What could God have done more in this his vineyard, (suppose he had designed it should put forth great branches, and spread over the earth) which he hath not done in it?

First, With regard to Doctrine :

Secondly, With regard to Scriptural Helps :

Thirdly, With regard to Discipline, and

Fourthly, With regard to Outward Protection.

These things being considered, I would then briefly enquire, *Wherefore, when he looked it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*

I. 1. First, What could have been done in this his vineyard, which God hath not done in it?

What

What could have been done more, with regard to *Doctrine*? From the very beginning, from the time that four young men united together, each of them was *homo unius libri*: a man of one book: God taught them all, to make his word a *lanthorn unto their feet, and a light in all their paths*. They had one, and only one rule of judgment, with regard to all their tempers, words, and actions, namely, the oracles of God. They were one and all determined to be *Bible-Christians*. They were continually reproached for this very thing: some terming them in derision, *Bible-bigots*; others *Bible-moths*: feeding they said, upon the Bible, as moths do upon cloth. And indeed unto this day, it is their constant endeavour to think and speak as the oracles of God.

2. It is true, a learned man, Dr. *Trap*, soon after their setting out gave a very different account of them. "When I saw, said the Doctor, these two books, *The Treatise on Christian Perfection*, and the *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, I thought these books will certainly do mischief. And so it proved: for presently after up sprung the Methodists. So he [Mr. *Law*] was their parent." Although this was not entirely true, yet there was some truth in it. All the Methodists carefully read these books, and were greatly profited thereby. Yet they did by no means spring from them, but from the Holy Scriptures; being *born*

again, as *St. Peter* speaks, *by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

3. Another learned man, the late *Bishop Warburton*, roundly affirms, that "They were the offspring of *Mr. Law*, and *Count Zinzendorf* together." But this was a greater mistake still. For they had met together several years before they had the least acquaintance with *Count Zinzendorf*, or even knew there was such a person in the world. And when they did know him, although they esteemed him very highly in love, yet they did not dare to follow him one step farther than they were warranted by the Scripture.

4. The book which, next to the Holy Scripture, was of the greatest use to them, in settling their judgment as to the grand point of Justification by Faith, was the Book of Homilies. They were never clearly convinced, that we are justified by faith alone, till they carefully consulted these, and compared them with the Sacred Writings, particularly *St. Paul's* Epistle to the *Romans*. And no Minister of the Church, can with any decency oppose these, seeing at his Ordination he subscribed to them, in subscribing the thirty-sixth Article of the Church.

5. It has been frequently observed, that very few were clear in their judgment both with regard to justification, and sanctification. Many who have spoken and written admirably well, concerning

concerning justification, had no clear conception, nay were totally ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification. Who has wrote more ably than *Martin Luther*, on justification by faith alone? And who was more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification, or more confused in his conceptions of it? In order to be thoroughly convinced of this, of his total ignorance with regard to sanctification, there needs no more than to read over without prejudice, his celebrated Comment on the Epistle to the *Galatians*. On the other hand, how many writers of the *Romish* Church, (as *Francis Sales* and *Juan de Castaniza* in particular) have wrote strongly and scripturally on sanctification: who nevertheless were entirely unacquainted with the nature of justification. Insomuch that the whole body of their Divines at the Council of *Trent* in their *Catechismus ad Parochos* [Catechism which every parish Priest is to teach his people] totally confound sanctification and justification together. But it has pleased God to give the Methodists a full and clear knowledge of each, and the wide difference between them.

6. They know indeed, that at the same time a man is justified, sanctification properly begins. For when he is justified, he is *born again, born from above, born of the Spirit*: which although it is not, (as some suppose) the whole process of

sanctification, is doubtless the gate of it. Of this likewise God has given them a full view. They know the New-Birth implies as great a change in the soul, in him that is *born of the Spirit*, as was wrought in his body, when he was born of a woman: not an outward change only, as from drunkenness to sobriety, from robbery or theft to honesty: (this is the poor, dry, miserable conceit of those that know nothing of real religion) but an inward change, from all unholy, to all holy tempers: from pride to humility, from passionateness to meekness; from peevishness and discontent to patience and resignation: in a word, from an earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

7. It is true, a late very eminent Author, in his strange treatise on Regeneration, proceeds, entirely on the supposition, That it is the whole, gradual progress of sanctification. No: it is only the threshold of sanctification: the first entrance upon it. And as in the Natural Birth, a man is born at once, and then grows larger and stronger by degrees; so in the Spiritual Birth, a man is born at once, and then gradually increases in spiritual stature and strength. The New-Birth therefore is the first point of sanctification, which may increase more and more unto the perfect day.

8. It

8. It is then a great blessing given to this people, that as they do not think or speak of Justification, so as to supersede sanctification, so neither do they think or speak of sanctification, so as to supersede justification. They take care to keep each in its own place, laying equal stress on one and the other. They know God has joined these together, and it is not for man to put them asunder. Therefore they maintain with equal zeal and diligence, the doctrine of free, full, present justification on the one hand, and of entire sanctification both of heart and life on the other. Being as tenacious of inward holiness, as any Mystic, and of outward, as any Pharisee.

9. Who then is a Christian, according to the light which God hath vouchsafed to this people? He that being justified by faith, hath peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: and at the same time, is *born again, born from above, born of the Spirit*: inwardly changed from the image of the devil, to that *image of God wherein he was created*. He that finds the love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him; and whom this love sweetly constrains to *love his neighbour, every man, as himself*. He that has learned of his Lord to be meek and lowly in heart, and in every state to be content. He in whom is that whole mind, all those tempers, which were also in Christ Jesus.

He that abstains from all appearance of evil in his actions, and that *offends not with his tongue*. He that walks in all the commandments of God, and in all his ordinances blameless. He that in all his intercourse with men does to others as he would they should do to him : and in his whole life and conversation, whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he doth, doth all to the glory of God.

Now what could God have done more for this his vineyard, which he hath not done in it, with regard to *Doctrine*? We are to enquire,

II. Secondly, What could have been done which he hath not done in it, with regard to *Spiritual Helps*?

1. Let us consider this matter from the very beginning. Two young Clergymen, not very remarkable any way, of middle age, having a tolerable measure of health, though rather weak than strong, began about fifty years ago, to call sinners to repentance. This they did for a time, in many of the Churches in and about *London*. But two difficulties arose; first, The Churches were so crouded, that many of the parishioners could not get in: secondly, They preached new doctrines; That we are saved by Faith, and, That *without Holiness no man could see the Lord*. For one or other of these reasons, they were not long suffered

suffered to preach in the Churches. They then preached in Moorfields, Kennington-Common, and in many other public places. The fruit of their preaching quickly appeared. Many sinners were changed both in heart and life. But it seemed, this could not continue long: for every one clearly saw, these Preachers would quickly wear themselves out: and no Clergyman dared to assist them. But soon one and another, though not ordained offered to assist them. God gave a signal blessing to their word. Many sinners were thoroughly convinced of sin, and many truly converted to God. Their assistants increased both in number and in the success of their labours. Some of them were learned, some unlearned: most of them were young: a few middle-aged: some of them were weak: some, on the contrary, of remarkably strong understanding. But it pleased God to own them all, so that more and more brands were plucked out of the burning.

2. It may be observed, that these Clergymen all this time, had no plan at all. They only went hither and thither, wherever they had a prospect of saving souls from death. But when more and more asked, "What must I do to be saved?" They were desired to meet all together. Twelve came the first Thursday night; forty, the next: soon after, a hundred. And they continued to increase,

increase, till three or four and twenty years ago, the *London Society* amounted to about 2,800.

3. But how should this multitude of people be kept together? And how should it be known, Whether they walked worthy of their profession? They were providentially led, when they were thinking on another thing (namely, paying the public debt) to divide all the people into little companies, or classes, according to their places of abode, and appoint one person in each class, to see all the rest weekly. By this means it was quickly discovered, if any of them lived in any known sin. If they did, they were first admonished: and when judged incorrigible, excluded from the Society.

4. This division of the people, and exclusion of those that walked disorderly, without any respect of persons, were helps which few other communities had. To these, as the Societies increased, was soon added another. The Stewards of the Societies in each district, were desired to meet the Preachers once a quarter in some central place, to give an account of the spiritual and temporal state of their several Societies. The use of these Quarterly-Meetings was soon found to be exceeding great: in consideration of which they were gradually spread to all the Societies in the kingdom.

5. In order to increase the union between the Preachers, (as well as that of the people) they were desired to meet all together in *London*, and sometime after, a select number of them. Afterwards for more convenience, they met at *London*, *Bristol* and *Leeds* alternately. They spent a few days together in this General Conference: in considering, what might most conduce to the general good. The result was immediately signified to all their brethren. And they soon found, that what *St. Paul* observes of the whole Church, may be in a measure applied to every part of it, *The whole body being fitly framed together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love,* Eph. iv. 16.

6. That this may be the more effectually done, they have another excellent Help in the constant change of Preachers: it being their rule, that no Preacher shall remain in the same Circuit more than two years together: and few of them more than one year. Some indeed have imagined, that this was a hinderance to the work of God. But long experience in every part of the kingdom proves the contrary. This has always shewn, that the people profit less by any one person than by a variety of Preachers: while they

"Use

“ Used the gifts on each bestowed,
Temperéd by the art of God.”

7. Together with these Helps, which are peculiar to their own Society, they have all those which are enjoyed in common by the other members of the Church of *England*. Indeed they have been long pressed to separate from it, to which they have had temptations of every kind. But they cannot, they dare not, they will not separate from it, while they can remain therein with a clear conscience. It is true, if any sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them, then they would be constrained to separate: but as this is not the case at present, we rejoice to continue therein.

8. What then could God have done more for his vineyard, which he hath not done in it, with regard to Spiritual Helps? He has hardly dealt so with any other people in the Christian world! If it be said, He could have made them a separate people, like the *Moravian Brethren*, I answer, This would have been a direct contradiction to his whole design in raising them up: namely, to spread Scriptural Religion throughout the land, among people of every denomination, leaving every one to hold his own opinions, and to follow his own mode of worship. This could only be done effectually, by
leaving

leaving these things as they were, and endeavouring to leaven the whole nation with that *faith that worketh by love.*

III. 1. Such are the *Spiritual Helps* which God has bestowed on this his vineyard, with no sparing hand. *Discipline* might be inserted among these: but we may as well speak of it under a separate head. It is certain, that in this respect the Methodists are a highly favoured people. Nothing can be more simple, nothing more rational, than the Methodist Discipline: it is entirely founded on Common Sense, particularly applying the general rules of Scripture. Any person determined to save his soul, may be united, (this is the only condition required) with them. But this desire must be evidenced by three marks; avoiding all known sin; doing good after his power, and attending all the ordinances of God. He is then placed in such a Class as is convenient for him, where he spends about an hour in a week. And the next quarter, if nothing is objected to him, he is admitted into the Society. And therein he may continue, as long as he continues to meet his brethren, and walks according to his profession.

2. Their Public Service is at five in the morning, and six or seven in the evening, that their temporal business may not be hindered. Only on
Sunday

Sunday it begins between nine and ten, and concludes with the Lord's Supper. On Sunday evening the Society meets : but care is taken to dismiss them early, that all the heads of families may have time to instruct their several households. Once a quarter the principal Preacher in every Circuit examines every member of the Societies therein. By this means, if the behaviour of any one is blameable, which is frequently to be expected in so numerous a body of people, it is easily discovered, and either the offence or the offender removed in time.

3. Whenever it is needful to exclude any disorderly member out of the Society, it is done in the most quite and inoffensive manner; only by not renewing his ticket, at the Quarterly Visitation. But in some cases, where the offence is great, and there is danger of public scandal, it is judged necessary to declare when all the members are present, "A. B. is no longer a member of our Society." Now what can be more rational or more scriptural, than this simple Discipline? Attended from the beginning to the end with no trouble, expence or delay?

IV. 1. But was it possible that all these things should be done, without a flood of opposition? The prince of this world was not dead, nor asleep: and would he not fight, that his kingdom might

might not be delivered up? If the word of the Apostle be found true, in all ages and nations; *All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.* If this be true with regard to every individual Christian, how much more, with regard to bodies of men, visibly united together, with the avowed design, to overthrow his kingdom? And what could withstand the persecution he would not fail to stir up, against a poor, defenceless, despised people, without any visible help, without money, without power, without friends?

2. In truth the god of this world was not asleep. Neither was he idle: he *did* fight, and that with all his power, that his kingdom might not be delivered up. He “brought forth all his hosts to war.” First, he stirred up the beasts of the people. They roared like lions: they encompassed the little and defenceless on every side. And the storm rose higher and higher, till deliverance came, in a way that none expected. God stirred up the heart of our late gracious Sovereign, to give such orders to his Magistrates, as being put in execution, effectually quelled the madness of the people. It was about the same time that a great man applied personally to his Majesty, begging that he would please to “take a course to stop these run-about Preachers.” His Majesty looking sternly upon him, answered without cere-

mony, like a King, "I tell you, while I sit on the throne, no man shall be persecuted for conscience sake."

3. But in defiance of this, several who bore his Majesty's Commission, have persecuted them from time to time: and that under colour of law, availing themselves of what is called the Conventicle Act: one in particular, in *Kent*, who some years since took upon him to fine one of the preachers and several of his hearers. But they thought it their duty to appeal to his Majesty's Court of King's Bench. The Cause was given for the plaintiffs, who have ever since been permitted to worship God according to their own conscience?

4. I believe, this is a thing wholly without precedent: I find no other instance of it, in any age of the Church, from the day of Pentecost to this day. Every opinion right and wrong, has been tolerated, almost in every age and nation. Every mode of worship has been tolerated, however superstitious or absurd. But I do not know, that true, vital, scriptural Religion was ever tolerated before. For this the people called Methodists, have abundant reason to praise God. In their favour, he hath wrought a new thing in the earth: he hath stilled the enemy and the avenger. This then they must ascribe unto

unto Him, the author of their outward as well as inward peace.

V. 1. What indeed could God have done more for this his vineyard, which he hath not done in it? This having been largely shewed, we may now proceed to that strong and tender expostulation, After all that I had done, might I not have looked for the most excellent grapes, wherefore then brought it forth wild grapes? Might I not have expected a general increase of faith and love, of righteousness and true holiness? yea, and of the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, temperance? Was it not reasonable to expect that these fruits would have overspread his whole Church? Truly when I saw what God had done among his people between forty and fifty years ago, when I saw them warm in their first love, magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in God their Saviour, I could expect nothing less than that all these would have lived like angels here below: that they would have walked as continually seeing him that is invisible, having constant communion with the Father and the Son, living in eternity and walking in eternity. I looked to see *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*, in the whole tenor of their conversation *shewing*

forth his praise, who had called them into his marvellous light.

2. But instead of this it brought forth wild grapes: fruit of a quite contrary nature. It brought forth Error in ten thousand shapes, turning many of the simple out of the way. It brought forth Enthusiasm, imaginary Inspiration, ascribing to the all-wise God, all the wild, absurd, self-inconsistent dreams of an heated imagination. It brought forth pride, robbing the Giver of every good gift of the honour due to his name. It brought forth prejudice, evil-furnishing, censoriousness, judging and condemning one another: all totally subversive of that brotherly love, which is the very badge of the Christian profession: without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God. It brought forth anger, hatred, malice, revenge, and every evil word and work: all direful fruits, not of the Holy Spirit, but of the bottomless pit.

3. It brought forth likewise in many, particularly, those that are increased in goods, that grand poison of souls, the love of the world, and that in all its branches: *the desire of the flesh*, that is, the seeking happiness in the pleasures of sense: *the desire of the eyes*, that is, seeking happiness in dress, or any of the pleasures of imagination: and *the pride of life*, that is, seeking happiness in the praise of men: or in that which ministers
to

to all these, laying up treasures on earth. It brought forth self-indulgence of every kind, delicacy, effeminacy, softness: but not softness of the right kind, that melts at human woe. It brought such base groveling affections, such deep earthly-mindedness, as that of the poor Heathens, which occasioned the lamentation of their own Poet over them,

O curvæ in terras animæ & cælestium inanes!

O souls bowed down to earth, and void of God!

4. O ye that have riches in possession, once more hear the word of the Lord! Ye that are rich in this world, that have food to eat, and raiment to put on, and something over. Are you clear of the curse? Of loving the world? Are you sensible of your danger? Do you feel, How hardly will they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven? Do you continue unburnt in the midst of the fire? Are you untouched with the love of the world? Are you clear from the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life? Do you *put a knife to your throat* when you sit down to meat, lest your *table* should be a *snare to you*? Is not your belly your god? Is not eating and drinking, or any other pleasure of sense the greatest pleasure you enjoy?

Do not you seek happiness in dress, furniture, pictures, gardens: or any thing else that pleases the eye? Do not you grow soft and delicate? Unable to bear cold, heat, the wind or the rain, as you did when you were poor? Are you not increasing in goods, laying up treasures on earth: instead of restoring to God in the poor, not so much, or so much, but all that you can spare? Surely *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven!*

5. But why will ye still bring forth wild grapes? What excuse can ye make? Hath God been wanting on *his* part? Have you not been warned over and over? Have ye not been fed with the sincere milk of the word? Hath not the whole word of God been delivered to you, and without any mixture of error? Were not the fundamental doctrines both of free, full, present Justification delivered to you, as well as Sanctification, both gradual and instantaneous? Was not every branch both of inward and outward Holiness clearly opened and earnestly applied? And that by Preachers of every kind, young and old, learned and unlearned. But it is well if some of you did not despise the helps which God had prepared for you. Perhaps you would hear none but Clergymen: or at least, none but men of learning. Will you not then

give

give God leave, to chuse his own messengers? To send by whom he *will* send? It is well if this bad wisdom was not one cause of your *bringing forth wild grapes?*

6. Was not another cause of it your despising that excellent Help, Union with a Christian Society! Have you not read, *How can one be warm alone? And, Woe be unto him that is alone when he falleth?* "But you have companions enough." Perhaps more than enough; more than are helpful to your soul: but have you enough that are athirst for God? and that labour to make *you* so? Have you companions enough, that watch over your soul, as they that must give account? And that freely and faithfully warn you, if you take any false step, or are in danger of doing so? I fear, you have few of these companions, or else you would bring forth better fruit.

7. If you are a member of the Society, do you make a full use of your privilege? Do you never fail to meet your Class? And that not as matter of form, but expecting that when you are met together in his name, your Lord will be in the midst of you? Are you truly thankful for the amazing Liberty of Conscience, which is vouchsafed to you and your Brethren? Such as never was enjoyed before, by persons in your circumstances. And are you thankful to the Giver of every

every good gift, for the general spread of true Religion? Surely you can never praise God enough for all these blessings, so plentifully showered down upon you, till you praise him with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven.



On Riches.

A

S E R M O N

On M A T T. xix. 24.







M A T T. xix. 24.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

1. **I**N the preceding verses we have an account of a young man, who came running to our Lord; and kneeling down, not in hypocrisy, but in deep earnestness of soul, and said unto him, *Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? All the commandments, saith he, I have kept from my youth: what lack I yet?* Probably he had kept them in the literal sense: yet he still loved the world. And he who knew what was in man, knew that in this particular case (for this is by no means a general rule) he could not be healed of that desperate disease, but by a desperate remedy. Therefore he answered, *Go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and come and follow me. But when he heard this, he went away sorrowful:*
for

for he had great possessions. So all the fair blossoms withered away ! For he would not lay up treasure in heaven at so high a price ! Jesus, observing this, looked round about and said unto his disciples (Mark x. 23, &c.) how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, and said among themselves, Who then can be saved ? If it be so difficult for rich men to be saved, who have so many and so great advantages ! Who are free from the cares of this world, and a thousand difficulties, to which the poor are continually exposed ?

2. It has indeed been supposed, he partly retracts what he had said, concerning the difficulty of rich men's being saved, by what is added in the tenth chapter of St. Mark. For after he had said, (ver. 23.) *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God : when the disciples were astonished at his words, Jesus answered again, and said unto them, How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God ?* (ver. 24.) But observe, 1. Our Lord did not mean hereby, to retract what he had said before. So far from it, that he immediately confirms it, by that awful declaration, *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,*

needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Observe, 2. Both one of these sentences and the other assert the very same thing. For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for those that *have riches* not to *trust* in them.

3. Perceiving their astonishment at this hard saying, *Jesus looked upon them*, (undoubtedly with an air of inexpressible tenderness, to prevent their thinking the case of the rich desperate) *With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*

4. I apprehend, by a rich man here is meant, not only a man that has immense treasures, one that has heaped up gold as dust, and silver as the sand of the sea: but any one that possesses more than the necessities and conveniences of life. One that has food and raiment sufficient for himself and his family, and something over, is rich. By the kingdom of God, or of heaven (exactly equivalent terms) I believe is meant, (not the kingdom of glory, although that will without question follow,) but the kingdom of heaven, that is, true Religion upon earth. The meaning then of our Lord's assertion is this, That it is absolutely impossible, unless by that power to which all things are possible, that a rich man should be a Christian: to have the mind that

was in Christ, and to walk as Christ walked. Such are the hindrances to Holiness, as well as the temptations to Sin which surround him on every side.

I. First, Such are the hindrances to Holiness, which surround him on every side. To enumerate all these would require a large volume: I would only touch upon a few of them.

1. The root of all Religion is *faith*, without which it is impossible to please God. Now whether you take this in its general acceptation, for an *evidence of things not seen*, of the invisible and the eternal world, of God and the things of God: how natural a tendency have riches to darken this evidence, to prevent your attention to God and the things of God, and to things invisible and eternal! And if you take it in another sense, for a confidence, what a tendency have riches to destroy this? To make you trust, either for happiness or defence, in them, not *in the living God*? Or if you take faith in the proper Christian sense, as a divine confidence in a pardoning God, what a deadly, what an almost insuperable hindrance to this faith are riches? What! Can a wealthy, and consequently an honourable man, come to God, as having nothing to pay? Can he lay all his greatness

greatness by, and come as a sinner, a mere sinner, the vilest of sinners! As on a level with those that feed the dogs of his flock! With that *beggar, who lies at his gate full of sores?* Impossible, unless by the same power that made the heavens and the earth. Yet without doing this, he cannot in any sense *enter into the kingdom of God.*

2. What a hindrance are riches to the very first fruit of faith, namely, the love of God? *If any man love the world, says the Apostle, the love of the Father is not in him.* But how is it possible for a man, not to love the world, who is surrounded with all its allurements? How can it be, that he should then hear the still small voice, which says, "My son give me thy heart?" What power less than Almighty, can send the rich man an answer to that prayer,

" Keep me dead to all below,
Only Christ resolv'd to know:
Firm, and disengag'd and free,
Seeking all my bliss in Thee!"

3. Riches are equally a hindrance to the loving our neighbour as ourselves, that is, to the loving all mankind, as Christ loved us. A rich man may indeed love them that are of his

own party, or his own opinion. He may love them that love him : *do not even Heathens*, baptized or unbaptized *the same*? But he cannot have pure, disinterested good-will to every child of man. This can only spring from the love of God, which his great possessions expelled from his soul.

4. From the love of God, and from no other fountain, true humility likewise flows. Therefore so far as they hinder the love of God, riches must hinder humility likewise. They hinder this also in the rich, by cutting them off from that freedom of conversation, whereby they might be made sensible of their defects, and come to a true knowledge of themselves. But how seldom do they meet with a faithful friend : with one that can and will deal plainly with them? And without this, we are likely to grow grey in our faults; yea, to die

" With all our imperfections on our head."

5. Neither can meekness subsist without humility; for *of pride naturally cometh contention*. Our Lord accordingly directs us to learn of Him at the same time *to be meek and lowly in heart*. Riches therefore are as great a hindrance to meekness as they are to humility : in preventing lowliness

ness of mind, they of consequence prevent meekness, which increases in the same proportion as we sink in our own esteem; and on the contrary, necessarily decreases as we think more highly of ourselves.

6. There is another Christian temper which is nearly allied to meekness and humility. But it has hardly a name. St. Paul terms it, *ἑπιεικία*. Perhaps till we find a better name, we may call it *yieldingness*: a readiness to submit to others, to give up our own will. This seems to be the quality which St. James ascribes to *the wisdom from above*, when he styles it *ἡπιότης*, which we render *easy to be intreated*; *easy to be convinced* of what is true; *easy to be persuaded*. But how rarely is this amiable temper to be found in a wealthy man! I do not know that I have found such a prodigy ten times, in above threescore and ten years.

7. And how uncommon a thing is it, to find patience in those that have large possessions! Unless when there is a counterbalance of long and severe affliction with which God is frequently pleased to visit those he loves, as an antidote to their riches. This is not uncommon: he often sends pain and sickness, and great crosses, to them that have great possessions.

By these means *patience has its perfect work, till they are perfect and entire, lacking nothing.*

II. Such are some of the hindrances to Holiness, which surround the rich on every side! We may now observe on the other side, what a temptation riches are, to all unholy tempers.

1. And first, how great is the temptation to *Atheism*, which naturally flows from riches; even to an entire forgetfulness of God, as if there was no such Being in the universe? This is at present usually termed *Dissipation*, a pretty name, affixt by the great Vulgar, to an utter disregard for God and indeed for the whole invisible world. And how is the rich man surrounded with all manner of temptations to continual Dissipation! Yes, how is the Art of Dissipation studied among the rich and great! As *Prior* keenly says,

“ Cards are dealt and Dice are brought
Happy effects of human wit,
That Alma may herself forget.”

Say rather

“ That mortals may their God forget!”

That

That they may keep Him utterly out of their thoughts, who though he sitteth on the circle of the heavens, yet is about their *bed, and about their path, and spieth out all their ways.* Call this wit, if you please: but is it wisdom? O no! It is far, very far from it! Thou fool, dost thou imagine, because thou dost not see God, that God doth not see thee? Laugh on! Play on! Sing on! Dance on! But *for all these things God will bring thee to judgment!*

2. From Atheism there is an easy transition to *Idolatry*: from the worship of no God to the worship of false gods: and in fact, he that does not love God (which is his proper and his only proper worship) will surely love some of the works of his hands; will love the creature if not the Creator. But to how many species of *Idolatry*, is every rich man exposed? What continual and almost insuperable temptations is he under to *love the world?* And that in all its branches? *The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life.* What innumerable temptations will he find, to gratify the *desire of the flesh?* Understand this right. It does not refer to one only, but all the outward senses. It is equal idolatry, to seek our happiness in gratifying any or all of these. But there is the greatest danger, lest men should seek it in gratifying

gratifying our taste: in a moderate sensuality: in a regular kind of Epicurism: not in gluttony, or drunkenness: far be that from them! They do not disorder the body: they only keep the soul dead: dead to God and all true Religion.

3. The rich are equally surrounded with temptations from *the desire of the eyes*, that is, the seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination, the pleasures of which the eyes chiefly minister. The objects that give pleasure to the imagination are grand, or beautiful, or new. Indeed all rich men have not a taste for grand objects: but they have for new and beautiful things: especially for new: the desire of novelty being as natural to men, as the desire of meat and drink. Now how numerous are the temptations to this kind of idolatry, which naturally springs from riches? How strongly and continually are they solicited to seek happiness, (if not in grand, yet) in beautiful houses, in elegant furniture, in curious pictures, in delightful gardens? Perhaps in that trifle of all trifles, rich or gay apparel? Yea, in every new thing, little or great, which Fashion, the mistress of fools, recommend? How are rich men, of a more elevated turn of mind tempted, to seek happiness, as their various tastes lead, in poetry, history, music, philosophy, or curious arts and sciences! Now although it is
certain

certain all these have their use, and therefore may innocently be perused, yet the seeking happiness in any of them instead of God, is manifest idolatry. And therefore were it only on this account that riches furnish him with the means of indulging all these desires, it might well be asked, *Is not the life of a rich man* (above all others) *a temptation upon earth?*

4. What temptation likewise must every rich man have, to seek happiness in *the pride of life*? I do not conceive the Apostle to mean thereby pomp, or state, or equipage: so much as *the honour that cometh of men*, whether it be deserved or not. A rich man is sure to meet with this: it is a snare he cannot escape. The whole city of *London* uses the words *rich* and *good* as equivalent terms. "Yes, say they, He is a good man: he is worth a hundred thousand pounds." And indeed every where, if *thou dost well unto thyself, if thou increasest in goods, men will speak well of thee.* All the world is agreed

"A thousand pound supplies
The want of twenty thousand qualities."
And who can bear general applause, without being puffed up!. Without being insensibly induced

duced to think of himself *more highly than he ought to think?*

5. How is it possible that a rich man should escape pride, were it only on this account, that his situation necessarily occasions praise to flow in upon him from every quarter. For praise is generally poison to the soul; and the more pleasing, the more fatal: particularly when it is undeserved. So that well might our Poet say,

“ Parent of evil, bane of honest deeds
Pernicious flattery ! Thy destructive seeds
In an ill hour, and by a fatal hand
Sadly diffused o'er virtue's gleby land,
With rising pride amid the corn appear,
And check the hope and promise of the year !

And not only praise, whether deserved or undeserved, but every thing about him tends to inspire and increase pride. His noble house; his elegant furniture, his well-chosen pictures, his fine horses, his equipage, his very dress, yea, even “the embroidery plaistered on his tail:” all these will be matter of commendation to some or other of his guests, and so have an almost irresistible tendency to make him think himself a better man, than those who have not these advantages.

6. How

6. How naturally likewise do riches feed and increase the *self-will* which is born in every child of man! As not only his domestic servants and immediate dependants, are governed implicitly by his will, finding their account therein, but also most of his neighbours and acquaintance study to oblige him in all things: so his will being continually indulged, will of course be continually strengthened, till at length he will be ill able to submit to the will either of God or men.

7. Such a tendency have riches to beget and nourish every temper that is contrary to the love of God. And they have equal tendency to feed every passion and temper, that is contrary to the love of our neighbour; *contempt*, for instance, particularly of inferiors, than which nothing is more contrary to love. *Resentment* of any real or supposed offence; perhaps even *revenge*, although God claims this as his own peculiar prerogative: at least *anger*: for it immediately rises in the mind of a rich man, "What to use *me* thus! Nay, but he shall soon know better: I am now able to do myself justice."

8. Nearly related to anger, if not rather a species of it, are *fretfulness* and *peevishness*. But are the rich more assaulted by these than
the

the poor? All experience shews that they are, one remarkable instance I was a witness of many years ago. A gentleman of large fortune, while we were seriously conversing, ordered a servant to throw some coals on the fire, a puff of smoke came out. He threw himself back in his chair and cried out, "O Mr. *Wesley*, these are the crosses which I meet with every day!" I could not help asking, "Pray, Sir *John*, are these the heaviest crosses you meet with?" Surely these crosses would not have fretted him so much, if he had had fifty instead of five thousand pounds a year!

9. But it would not be strange, if rich men were in general void of all good dispositions, and an easy prey to all evil ones, since so few of them pay any regard to that solemn declaration of our Lord, without observing which we cannot be his disciples. *And he said unto them all*, the whole multitude, not unto his Apostles only, *If any man will come after me, will be a real Christian, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*, Luke ix. 23. O how hard a saying is this, to those that are at ease in the midst of their possessions! Yet the scripture cannot be broken. Therefore unless a man do *deny himself* every pleasure which does not prepare him for taking pleasure in

in God, *and take up his cross daily*; obey every command of God, however grievous to flesh and blood, he cannot be a disciple of Christ, he cannot *enter into the kingdom of God*.

10. Touching this important point, of *denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily*, let us appeal to matter of fact: let us appeal to every man's conscience in the sight of God. How many rich men are there among the Methodists (observe there was not one, when they were first joined together!) who actually do *deny themselves and take up their cross daily*? Who resolutely abstain from every pleasure, either of sense or imagination, unless they know by experience, that it prepares them for taking pleasure in God? Who declines no cross, no labour or pain, which lies in the way of his duty? Who of you that are now rich, deny yourselves just as you did when you were poor? Who as willingly endure labour or pain now, as you did when you were not worth five pounds? Come to particulars. Do you fast now as often as you did then? Do you rise as early in the morning? Do you endure cold or heat, wind or rain, as cheerfully as ever? See one reason among many, why so few increase in goods, without decreasing in grace! Because they no longer deny themselves and take up their daily

cross. They no longer, alas! endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ!

11. *Go to now, ye rich men! Weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. That must come upon you in a few days, unless prevented by a deep and entire change! The canker of your gold and silver will be a testimony against you, and will eat your flesh as fire. O how pitiable is your condition! And who is able to help you? You need more plain dealing than any men in the world. And you meet with less. For how few dare speak as plain to you, as they would do to one of your servants? No man living that either hopes to gain any thing by your favour, or fears to lose any thing by your displeasure. O that God would give me acceptable words, and cause them to sink deep into your hearts! Many of you have known me long, well nigh from your infancy! You have frequently helped me, when I stood in need. May I not say you loved me? But now the time of our parting is at hand: my feet are just stumbling upon the dark mountains. I would leave one word with you, before I go hence: and you may remember it, when I am no more seen.*

12. O let your heart be whole with God! Seek your happiness in him and him alone.

Beware

Beware that you cleave not to the dust! *This earth is not your place.* See that you use this world as not abusing it: *use* the world, and enjoy God. Sit as loose to all things here below, as if you was a poor beggar. Be a good steward of the manifold gifts of God, that when you are called to give an account of your stewardship, He may say, *Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!*

End of the EIGHTH VOLUME.